

STAFF BEHAVIOUR AND CODE OF CONDUCT

(Extracted from the Policy for Safeguarding & Promoting the Welfare of Children, September 2020)

17 STAFF BEHAVIOUR AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Teachers and other members of staff in any school need to take care to ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse.

The nature of the interactions between staff and students is central to the ethos at d'Overbroeck's. At the heart of this ethos lie trust, mutual respect and an emphasis on being true to oneself and on encouraging open and honest communication. We want this to be a school community that values and promotes individuality, enthusiasm and personal commitment, and flexibility. We want to get to know our students and to work with them as individuals, each with her or his own personality, talents, interests, needs and aspirations. Our code of conduct for staff is designed to accommodate and promote this ethos while ensuring that our working practices are thoughtful and well-considered and that they are designed with the safety and protection of staff and students in mind.

17.1 Making a professional judgement

It is important to stress that this guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is or is not appropriate behaviour for staff in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff members may have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of a child or young person which could contravene the guidance given in this Code, or where no guidance exists.

In such circumstances, judgements and actions taken should always be recorded and shared with a senior member of staff as soon as possible after the event.

At all times, members of staff are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge. They should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe, and whether they are applied equitably.

17.2 Propriety and behaviour

All staff in a school have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. It is therefore expected that members of staff at d'Overbroeck's will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public in general and all those with whom they work.

Staff should be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in contexts other than the work place.

There may be times, for example, when an adult's behaviour or actions in their personal life may come under scrutiny from local communities, the media or public authorities. This could be

because their behaviour is considered to compromise their position in the workplace or to indicate an unsuitability to work with children or young people. Misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence would be examples of such behaviour.

17.3 Position of trust

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people in education are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care.

It is an offence under section 16 of the Sexual Offences Act, 2003, for a person in a position of trust, such as a teacher, to engage in a sexual relationship with a young person under the age of 18 even if, in the case of those over the 16, the relationship is consensual. d'Overbroeck's policy goes beyond this in stating that members of staff must not under any circumstances engage in a relationship with any student at d'Overbroeck's, regardless of whether or not they are under the age of 18. Failure to adhere to this policy would result in the school's disciplinary procedures being invoked.

Staff must take all reasonable steps to ensure that their actions and behaviour do not place them or students at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a student. Interactions and communications between staff and students at d'Overbroeck's should remain professional in nature at all times.

17.4 Communication with students

Communications with students must always be professional in nature and in motivation. Staff should not write personal messages to students in any medium – including letters, notes, text messages, emails, messages left on social networking websites, etc. They should not accept students as friends on social media. Staff should also not communicate with students using text messages, or give their personal mobile phone numbers or personal email addresses to students, unless there is a demonstrably valid professional reason for doing so.

Communication with students should not be from a personal phone or email address: if a member of staff needs to contact a student by telephone or email, s/he should do so using a school telephone and/or the d'Overbroeck's email system.

The group leader on all school trips and visits involving an overnight stay should take a school mobile phone with him/her and may ask the students for their mobile numbers before allowing them out in small, unsupervised groups. The school mobile should be used for any contact with students that may be necessary. The group leader must then delete any record of students' mobile phone numbers at the end of the trip or visit and should ensure that students delete any staff numbers that they may have acquired during the trip.

17.5 One-to-one situations

Members of staff at d'Overbroeck's are likely to find themselves in one-to-one situations with a student from time to time. In our Sixth Form in particular, one-to-one meetings between students and their Director of Studies (that is their personal and academic tutor) are a key feature of our pastoral and mentoring approach. In addition, teaching staff at d'Overbroeck's will often take the time to give extra support to a student who needs it; there are some instances where a subject may need to be taught in one-to-one lessons; the School Counsellor

needs to see students in private as, from time to time, may Houseparent's and other staff with pastoral responsibilities.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that our behaviour is totally beyond reproach, and that it is not likely inadvertently to lay us open to allegations of abuse. It is good practice to: avoid one-to-one meetings with students in remote or secluded areas of the school; wherever possible, ensure that others are within earshot; use a room with a visual panel and / or leave the door open (unless there are good reasons why the conversation has to be had in confidence); avoid the use of 'Engaged' or equivalent signs, as they may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy.

It is important always to report to a senior colleague any one-to-one situation in which a student may show signs of becoming uncomfortable or ill at ease.

Pre-arranged meetings with students away from the school premises are not permitted unless approval has obtained from their parent and the DSL or other senior colleague with delegated authority.

17.6 Physical contact with students

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with students, but it is crucial that they do so only in ways which are appropriate to their professional role. Staff should, therefore, use their professional judgement at all times.

Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with students and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by students or onlookers. A member of staff can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and should be cautious of any demonstration of affection. Physical contact should never be secretive, or of the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority.

If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted or that it may have been misinterpreted, s/he should record the incident and circumstances and inform the DSL or one of the other colleagues with designated responsibility who will advise on the best course of action in the circumstances.

17.7 Physical restraint

Any physical restraint is only permissible when a child is in imminent danger of inflicting an injury on himself/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 DSL who will decide what to do next.

Please refer to the d'Overbroeck's Physical Restraint Policy for more detailed information.

17.8 Physical education and other activities requiring physical contact

Where exercises or procedures need to be demonstrated, great caution should be used if the demonstration involves contact with students and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a student so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a

particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the student's agreement.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

17.9 Transporting students

It is inadvisable for a member of staff to give a lift in a car to a student alone. Wherever possible and practicable it is advisable that transport is undertaken other than in private vehicles, with at least one adult additional to the driver acting being present.

That said, there will inevitably be circumstances in which a member of staff, in their professional capacity and in the normal course of their duties, is required to transport a student unaccompanied in a car. It is not unusual, for instance, in cases where a boarding student needs to move from one host family to another for one of the colleagues from the Boarding Office to help them do so. Another example may be a member of the PE department needing to accompany a student to A&E following a sporting injury. In all such situations, the journey should be made known to a senior member of staff and a note made of the journey, its purpose and the time, date and destination. The member of staff concerned should retain this note in case it needs to be referred to at a later date.

17.10 Confidentiality

Staff members should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to students or adults wishing to tell them about something serious. They should guarantee only that they will pass on information to the minimum number of people who must be told in order to ensure that the proper action is taken to sort out the problem and that they will not tell anyone who does not have a clear need to know. They will also take whatever steps they can to protect the informing student or adult from any retaliation or unnecessary stress that might be feared after a disclosure has been made.

Staff may have access to confidential information about children and young people in order to undertake their responsibilities. In some circumstances they may have access to, or be given, highly sensitive or private information. These details must be kept confidential at all times and shared only when it is in interests of the child to do so. Such information must not be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass a child or young person concerned. It should never be shared casually in conversation or passed to any person other than on a strictly need-to-know basis.

There may be circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a child, for example if abuse is suspected. In such cases, staff have a duty to pass such information on without delay, but only to those with designated responsibilities for child protection.

If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential s/he should seek guidance from a senior member of staff or from one of the colleagues with designated responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.

17.11 Photography and videos

Many school activities involve the taking or recording of images. Any such work should take place with due regard to the law and the need to safeguard the privacy, dignity, safety and well-being of students. Informed consent from parents and agreement from the student should always be sought before an image is taken for any purpose.

Careful consideration should be given to the question of how these activities are organised and undertaken. Care should be taken to ensure that all parties understand the implications of the image being taken, especially if it is to be used for any publicity purposes or published in the media or on the Internet.

Staff should:

- Act in accordance with the school's Taking, Storing and Using Images of Children Policy;
- Be clear about the purpose of the activity and what will happen to the images when the lesson/activity is concluded;
- Ensure that a senior member of staff is aware of the use and its purpose;
- Avoid making images in one-to-one situations, or ones which show a single child with no surrounding context;
- Ensure students are aware that they are being photographed and that they have agreed to this; also that they understand why the images are being taken, and that they are appropriately dressed;
- Use only equipment provided or authorised by the school;
- Any photographs involving students taken on an authorised personal device should be deleted from the personal device as soon as they have been downloaded onto the school system;
- Seek permission from parents where appropriate;
- Remain sensitive to any students who, for whatever reason, appear uncomfortable and recognise the potential for such activities to raise concerns or lead to misunderstandings.
- Be able to justify any images of children in their possession.

It is totally unacceptable for any member of staff at d'Overbroeck's to take photographs of students for their personal use.

17.12 Home visits

All work with students and parents should, wherever possible, be undertaken in school or other recognised workplace. There may, however, be occasions where, in response to urgent or specific situations, it is necessary to make one-off or regular home visits. While we recognise that staff at d'Overbroeck's are highly unlikely to have to make such visits, we think it advisable to set out a code of conduct that should be applied if and when relevant.

Where a member of staff has to visit a student's home, it is essential that a senior member of staff has approved the visit, or sequence of visits, and that an appropriate risk assessment is in place to safeguard students and the adults who work with them. A risk assessment should

include an evaluation of any known factors regarding the child/young person, parents and others living in the household.

Specific consideration should be given to visits outside of 'office hours' or in remote or secluded locations. Following an assessment, appropriate risk management measures should be in place before visits are agreed. Where little or no information is available, visits should not be made alone.

Where a programme of work is to be undertaken in the home, an appropriate work space should be provided and a written work plan/contract should be agreed with the student and parent. This should include: clear objectives; content; timing; and duration of sessions; ground-rules; child protection and confidentiality statements. The plan should take into account the preferences of student and parent.

There should also be an agreement that the parent or other suitable adult will remain in the home throughout the session. Where the situation is such that changes in agreed work arrangements are required, a quick assessment will be necessary to determine if the session can continue. The DSL or another appropriate senior member of staff should then be informed as soon as is practically possible.

17.13 Actively promoting fundamental British values

In common with all schools, we are required to 'actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and respect and tolerance for others, including those with different faiths and beliefs'. We also need to be able to demonstrate that we do this.

These values are entirely in keeping with the ethos at d'Overbroeck's and should therefore be inherent in everything that we do. Nevertheless, it is important always to bear these in mind and to ensure that they infuse every aspect of our school life, in the classroom, in extra-curricular activities, etc.

17.14 The Prevent Duty

The Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on schools to take active steps to prevent their students from being radicalised or drawn into extremism and terrorism. In line with government guidance, we consider our responsibilities under The Prevent Duty to be part of our broader responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of our students. To this end, a concern that a student is at risk of being radicalised or drawn into extremism should be treated in exactly the same way as a concern relating to physical, emotional, sexual or any other sort of abuse. Such concerns must be communicated at a very early stage to the DSL or any of the other staff with designated responsibility for child protection.

We also have a duty to ensure that any speakers we invite to speak in school are suitably vetted in advance, and supervised while they are speaking or otherwise interacting with students, to ensure that such talks can never present an opportunity for extremist or partisan views to be promoted in our school.

17.15 A non-partisan approach to political, ethical and religious issues

A healthy understanding of the world around us is an important part of the educational experience that we want to provide for our students. In doing so, the emphasis should always be on open-mindedness, tolerance and critical evaluation – encouraging students to appreciate

that, where moral, ethical, religious or political questions are concerned, there is always likely to be a multiplicity of viewpoints, and stressing the need to respect the views of others.

When such issues arise, in subject teaching or in the context of co-curricular or extra-curricular activities (such as Debating Club) staff must always ensure that they offer a balanced presentation of opposing views which precludes the promotion of partisan (ie, one-sided) opinions or dogma.

ISI guidance also stipulates that 'pupils should not be actively encouraged by teachers or others to support particular political viewpoints'.

17.16 Whistleblowing

Safeguarding in a school is everyone's responsibility. All staff and volunteers should feel able to contribute to, and help improve, the school's safeguarding and child protection arrangements and policy.

By the same token, all staff and volunteers should also feel able to raise concerns about what they may consider to be inadequate or unsafe practice or about potential failures in the school's safeguarding policy and practice. Such concerns should be addressed directly to the DSL or to one of the other member of the Safeguarding team. They will always be taken seriously and given careful consideration by the senior leadership team.

If a member of staff has concerns about the behaviour or another member of staff towards a student, then s/he should report these concerns at once to the Principal, and in their absence to the Deputy Principal or the DSL, as in 18.1.

To report such a concern, a member of staff may, in the first instance, go and talk to the Principal to make a verbal report. In such instances, the Principal will ask the member of staff concerned to make a written note of their concerns and submit them to him/her immediately after the meeting. If the initial report is made in writing (by note or email for instance), the Principal will ask to see the member of staff as soon as practically possible after receipt of the report to hear the concerns in more detail.

It cannot be overemphasised that such concerns must be reported at once. And no-one who reports a genuine concern in good faith needs to fear retribution. A member of staff or a student reporting a child protection issue, allegation or concern will suffer no adverse consequences, regardless of the status of the person against whom the allegation was made and of whether the allegation or concern prove founded over time, provided the report was made in good faith.

As a further safeguard, and to ensure that no serious concerns ever slip the net, staff should be aware of the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (tel: 0800 028 0285, from 8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday, or email: help@nspcc.org.uk). This is available for staff in schools who, for whatever reason, do not feel able to raise concerns regarding any child protection failures internally.