

Work Skills Learning (WSL) Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers	
Date adopted	February 2016
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Overview

WSL seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment, which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for children and young people in our care. Our values are set out in the Vision and Mission. This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding Policy.

This document should clarify what is expected in terms of professional behaviour; it gives clear advice about what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct. It also describes safe practice and which behaviours should be avoided. If a member of staff does not follow this code of conduct this may lead to disciplinary procedures.

Core Principles

- The welfare of children and young people is paramount.
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work in an open and transparent way.
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager or another senior member of staff over any incident, which may give rise to concern.
- Records should be made of any such incident and of decisions made/further actions agreed.
- Staff should apply the same professional standards in keeping with all WSL policies.
- All staff should know the name of their designated safeguarding lead be familiar with child protection arrangements and understand their responsibilities to safeguard and protect students.
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

Safe Working Practices for the Protection of Children and Young People and Staff at WSL

1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to help all staff establish the safest possible learning and working environments. The aims are to safeguard young people and reduce the risk of staff being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. This means that these guidelines apply to all adults working in WSL whatever their position, roles, or responsibilities.

2. Duty of Care

Teachers and other staff are accountable for the way in which they:

- exercise authority, manage risk and use resources.
- protect students from discrimination and avoidable harm.

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from physical and emotional harm. This duty is in part exercised through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationships between staff and children and young people and behaviour by staff that demonstrates integrity, maturity and good judgement.

There are legitimate high expectations about the nature of the professional involvement of staff in the lives of students. When individuals accept a role that involves working with children and young people, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role. Employers have a duty of care towards their employees which requires them to provide a safe working environment for staff and guidance about safe working practices.

This means that

Staff should:

- understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached
- always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests
- avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

This means that WSL should ensure that:

- safeguarding procedures are in place and reviewed
- systems are in place for concerns to be raised
- that adults are not placed in situations which render them particularly vulnerable

3. Exercise of Professional Judgement

This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour for staff. It does highlight however, behaviour that is illegal, inappropriate or inadvisable.

4. Power and Positions of Trust

- All adults working with students in education settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship between a member of staff and a student cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people; staff have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.
- Staff should always maintain appropriate professionalism and wherever possible they should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential.
- Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust with a child under 18, it is an offence for that person to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of that child, or to cause or incite that child to engage in or watch sexual activity.
- Where a person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust established with a person who has only recently left the school, any attempt to engage in sexual activity with that person will be a cause for concern and will be treated as a breach of trust established in that prior relationship.

This means that staff should not:

- use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a students' or family's detriment
- use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine students
- use their status and standing to form or promote a relationship with a student, which is of a sexual nature.
- attempt to initiate a relationship with a recent ex-pupil, which is of a sexual nature.

5. Confidentiality

Members of staff may have access to confidential information about students in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances staff may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about a student or his family for their own, or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass the student.

Confidential information about students should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the student's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

There are some circumstances in which a member of staff may be expected to share information about a student, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, individuals have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities. If a member of staff is in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential he or she should seek guidance from a senior member of staff, especially the DSL.

Any media or legal enquiries should be passed to senior leadership. Adults need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support students, they must not promise confidentiality or request students to do the same under any circumstances.

Additionally concerns and allegations about adults should be treated as confidential and passed to a senior leader without delay. This means that staff:

- are expected to treat information they receive about students in a discreet and confidential manner.
- in any doubt about sharing information they hold or which has been requested of them should seek advice from a senior member of staff
- need to be cautious when passing information to others about a student
- need to know to whom any concerns or allegations should be reported

6. Propriety and Behaviour

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of students. They should adopt

- high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their peers, students and the public in general. This means that staff should not:
- behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with students or act as a role model.

Staff should not:

- drink alcohol with current pupils in public or private places, nor purchase alcohol for pupils nor provide cigarette's.
- drink alcohol when supervising pupils or on school trips. This applies even when there are no pupils present, as the member of staff may be called to act if an emergency occurs.
- make inappropriate remarks to a student (including email, text messages, phone or letter etc)
- discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of students
- discuss a student's sexual relationships in inappropriate settings or contexts
- make (or encourage others to make) unprofessional personal comments in any form of communication (e-mail, conversations or social networking comments)

Staff must:

- Be aware that their behaviour in their personal lives may impact upon their work with students
- There may be exceptional circumstances where a member of staff may be personal friends with a parent which mean that normal social life will bring the student into social contact with a member of staff.
- If a member of staff finds themselves in a pub or other meeting place in which current pupils are drinking, the member of staff should not join the pupils and may need to draw the attention of bar staff to the age of the pupils.
- If a member of staff feels that there are exceptional reasons why the general restriction on drinking alcohol with students should not apply, they should discuss the matter with a senior member of staff.

- An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise her/his position within the work setting so it is important to exercise due care and attention when outside of the school environment.
- Membership of organisations whose goals are in conflict with the values and equality policies of the school is not acceptable.

7. Dress and Appearance

Staff should consider the manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role. Staff should ensure they are dressed decently, safely and appropriately for the tasks they undertake. Those who dress or appear in a manner which could be considered as inappropriate make themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegation. Appropriate personal presentation is expected of staff. Clothing should not display political or contentious slogans.

8. Gifts

Staff need to take care that they do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others, or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

- There are occasions when students or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, for example at Christmas or as a thank-you, and this is acceptable.
- It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.
- Members of staff **may not** give personal gifts to students.

It is acceptable for staff to offer prizes of small value in certain tasks or competitions. This means that staff should:

- ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued are declared
- ensure that gifts of significant value are declared.
- generally, only give gifts to an individual young person as part of an agreed reward system
- where giving gifts other than as above, ensure that these are of insignificant value and given to all students equally.

9. Infatuations

Staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. Staff should be aware that such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against staff. A member of staff who becomes aware that a student may be infatuated with themselves or a colleague should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior colleague so that appropriate action can be taken. In this way, steps can be taken to avoid hurt and distress for all concerned.

This means that staff should:

- Report to senior colleagues any indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a student may be infatuated with a member of staff.
- Be mindful if they are alone in a room with a student. Leave the door open if you have to.

10. Personal Living Space

No student should be in or invited into, the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents and

senior leaders or the home has been designated by the organisation or regulatory body as a work place e.g. childminders, foster carers. This means that staff should:

- be vigilant in maintaining their privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries

11.Communication with students (including the use of technology)

Communication between students and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites, social networking sites, online gaming and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a student. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the student, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Adults should also be circumspect in their communications with students so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. They should not give their personal contact details to students including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior leadership and parents. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a student outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet based web sites, such as social networking, instant messaging or gaming.