

## **CONTACT BETWEEN STAFF AND PUPILS OUTSIDE THE USUAL WORK CONTEXT**

Committee/Person Responsible for Policy:	<b>Headteacher/SLT</b>
Date Approved by Headteacher/SLT:	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
Next Review Due:	January 2024

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.**

##### **1.1 This policy applies to:-**

- All employees and volunteers at Foxwood Academy where the governing body has a delegated budget and powers of local management
- Any form of contact outside the usual work context between staff and pupils or their families. This includes non-direct contact such as telephone, via text message, email or on social networking sites
- Contact outside the usual work context between staff and former pupils, including those who have grown to adults

### **Context**

The Government guidance is clear and the Academy is committed to upholding recommendations: Arranging to meet with pupils from the school or setting away from the work premises should not be permitted unless the necessity for this is clear and approval is obtained from the Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy), the student and their parents/carers.

All those working with children in a school or education setting are in a position of trust in relation to all pupils on the roll. The relationship between a person working with a student(s) is one in which the adult has a position of power or influence. The Academy recognises that it is vital for adults to understand this power. The potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable pupils means that adults have a responsibility

to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. This means that staff should not:

- use their position to gain access to information for their own advantage and/or a student's or family's detriment
- use their power to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine students
- use their status and standing to form or promote relationships with pupils which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so.

Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others and report and record any such incident.

## **Principles**

- The welfare of the student is paramount
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of students
- 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 the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation
- Staff should not consume or be under the influence of alcohol or any substance, including prescribed medication, which may affect their ability to care for students
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity, or for acts of serious misconduct prohibition from teaching by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA)
- Staff should be aware of and understand the Academy's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, arrangements for Managing Allegations against Staff, Staff Conduct policy, whistle-blowing procedure and the procedures of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Partnership.

**1.1** This policy cannot cover all situations. Staff at times will be required to exercise their professional judgment and should seek guidance and support from the Safeguarding Team in the first place. The Headteacher will be informed. Inappropriate contact and/or a failure to follow advice will be treated seriously and could potentially lead to the initiation of safeguarding procedures in collaboration with the LA and disciplinary action taken. Depending on the circumstances, the Headteacher may need to liaise with the Nottinghamshire LADO team. The Headteacher may require the Safeguarding Lead to carry out an investigation if appropriate. The Chair of Governors will be informed. The

Academy ensures that the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Lead have up-to-date Managing Allegations training.

**1.2** It is the policy of the Academy that there will be no personal contact other than in certain exempted circumstances between staff and current/former students outside the normal working environment. Examples could include sporting activities, organised social circumstances (such as organised sports events, shared interests such as volunteering or scouts), external camps and clubs outside of Academy hours where a member of staff is employed. Guidance on Safer Working Practice is explicit that staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing friendships or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. The reasons for this are;

- Such contact can blur the professional boundaries between the staff member and student
- Such contact can compromise confidentiality and compromises the position of trust that all adults in our environment are afforded
- Such contact can place both students and the staff member in a position of vulnerability
- Students at the school may struggle to differentiate between the role of staff member and friend. They may therefore have expectations which the staff member cannot fulfil

## **2. INTENDED CONTACT**

Any proposed work related contact outside of the normal working environment must be agreed in advance by the Safeguarding Lead and/or Headteacher

### **2.1 Systems/Proforma**

The Safeguarding Lead must receive a completed Record of Contact Outside of School Hours form which provides detail of the contact. (See Appendix). The Senior or Deputy Safeguarding Lead then contacts the proposed family/organisation to discuss proposed arrangements. The suitability and risk associated with the proposed contact is assessed and the contact is approved / rejected. Staff are asked to provide the above forms yearly (September) and inform the safeguarding Lead or Deputy if circumstances change. There may be amendments as and when required to keep all concerned safe.

### **2.2 Home visits**

Home Visits may occasionally be required outside of the normal Academy hours. This will usually be for safeguarding reasons and may be more prevalent during extreme national circumstances such as a pandemic. The Academy follows DfE guidelines: Staff will normally undertake home visits with a colleague. Staff undertaking welfare visits should always try to give parents / carers advance warning unless there is good reason not to; e.g. because the visit has been prompted by safeguarding concerns and / or is at the request of children's social care. In these cases, one of the staff undertaking the visit should be a Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead. The purpose of the visit should be clarified and staff should be aware of the circumstances in which emergency services or partner

agencies should be contacted. Risk are assessed during the consideration of a request for contact outside of hour's process. If needed, an additional bespoke Risk Assessment will be written. Please refer to Home Visits section in the following DfE addendum, *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with Children and Young People in Education Settings, September 2020*.

<https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/GSWP%20Sept%202019.pdf>

*For specific COVID-19 related practice, please refer to SAFEGUARDING COVID-19 folder, Office 365.*

## **2.3 Existing Friendships**

It is acknowledged that staff may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents of pupils, independent of the professional relationship. Staff should, however, also be aware that professionals who sexually harm children often seek to establish relationships and contact outside of the workplace with both the child and their parents, in order to 'groom' the adult and the child and/or create opportunities for sexual abuse. ( *DfE Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with Children and Young People in Education Settings, May 2019; section 11, Social Contact Outside of the Workplace*).

<https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/GSWP%20COVID%20addendum%20April%202020%20final-1.pdf>

## **2.4 Former pupils – see Section 5**

## **3. UNPLANNED CONTACT**

**3.1** Unplanned or unexpected contact with pupils with whom a member of staff will have no on-going professional contact is inevitable at some point and this should be a minimal nature (e.g. a brief greeting in the street).

## **4. CORRESPONDENCE**

**4.1** Copies of any correspondence received by a member of staff should be drawn to the attention of the DSL's via a My Concern report. This will provide a record of the contact and any ensuing actions. Any online/digital correspondence should only be used in accordance with Acceptable Use Policy.

**4.3** Staff should be cautious when using social networking sites outside of work and avoid publishing or allowing to be published any material, including comments or images that could damage their professional reputation and/or bring the school Academy into disrepute. Staff should set their profile as 'private' and not allow access to students, their families and or carers.

Staff should also be mindful that requirements in relation to maintaining the confidentiality of students, their families, colleagues and the Academy itself apply to all forms of communication, including that which takes place on social networking sites.

**4.4** Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone numbers, home or email address to students unless the need to do so is agreed with the Headteacher. Any on-going contact from a student outside of the agreed contact should be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Lead. The Headteacher will be informed.

## **5. CONTACT WITH FORMER PUPILS**

In some circumstances former pupils may make contact with a previous member of staff. This may occur even when they have grown to adults.

**5.1** In these situations members of staff must take account of the fact that they are school employee's staff and that young people may struggle to differentiate between the roles of staff member and friend.

**5.2** Staff members must always discuss any such significant contact with their safeguarding team and seek advice on how to manage any future contact.

**5.3** If a former student requiring assistance or some form of help that lies outside of school, they should be signposted to relevant services where possible. However, if the Headteacher/Safeguarding Team agreed that further contact with the staff member is relevant and appropriate, a clear plan of involvement including outcomes expected and timescales must be drawn up and agreed.

**5.4** In the above circumstances, the Safeguarding Team must ensure that adequate support/supervision is available to the staff member and ensure that all such contacts and plans are recorded and that other appropriate agencies are involved.

**5.5** Where a close relationship develops between a member of school staff and an ex-pupil which may raise concerns about the member of staff's suitability to work with children, the Headteacher should contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice and guidance. The LADO can be contacted on 0115 9773921.

## **FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Further guidance can be found in the links above and in the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Partnership website.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Record of intended contact between staff and student(s) outside of the usual work context.**

#### **PART A**

Staff Name:	
Purpose of intended contact:	
Student(s) involved:	
Frequency of contact: (e.g. 2 hours per week/month)	
Location(s) of contact:	
Are parents or carers aware of contact taking place?	
Is contact likely to continue beyond the current academic year:	
Any other relevant information:	
Signed:	
Date:	

### **To be completed by DDP/SDP**

#### **PART B**

Evidence (name and status of contact, date, brief discussion notes)	
Is the nature of the contact appropriate and in line with Policy?	
Are there further actions required including notification of other agencies?	
Signed:	
Date:	
Review (date)	

*Please complete Part A, then email to Angie Potter or Carolyn Smith*