



Staff/Student Relationship Guidance

This guidance is not exhaustive and is designed to set out principles rather than to give detailed and specific advice. Clearly, the circumstances in which staff work vary (for example, working with very young children, sports staff, etc); this guidance is meant to provide general principles only. Although this advice applies primarily to teachers and to other adults within educational roles, all adults working within schools relate to students during their duties; again, the general principles apply equally to all who are involved in the school, including volunteers.

- The relationship between staff and students is a professional one. It is fully expected that staff in the school have a friendly and caring relationship with students; nevertheless, the basis of that relationship is professional not personal. It is suggested that a good test to apply is to reflect on whether the child's parents would be happy with the relationship if they were standing with you.
- A personal relationship between staff and a student is inappropriate. It is not appropriate for a member of staff to meet with a student out of school hours or off school premises. There are; however, limited extenuating circumstances which may arise and would need to be taken into consideration, for example, when your own children are friends with students in the school or when you have a personal relationship with parents of children in the school.
- Unnecessary physical contact with students must be avoided. In some circumstances, physical contact between a member of staff and a student is necessary and beneficial; it might be, for example, that a PE Teacher may need to demonstrate to a student how to hold a racket. In rare circumstances it may be appropriate for members of staff to use reasonable restraint in circumstances where a student is behaving in a manner which endangers him or herself or other people.
- Over-familiar words and actions, displays of affection, discussion of one's personal life or the personal life of the student are almost always inappropriate. Sexual innuendo is wrong in all circumstances. Staff must avoid actions, words or expressions that could be interpreted as suggesting that they have an emotional relationship with any student. In the professional staff-student relationship it is not appropriate to single a student out for favours or to suggest to a student that he or she is a special friend.
- Occasionally it is necessary for professional academic reasons for staff to communicate with students out of school. Personal email addresses, home or mobile phone numbers must not be given, asked for or used. A staff mobile phone number might be given to students for use during an educational visit; however, this should only be in emergency situations and where possible, the school's mobile phone should be used for this purpose. Pastoral matters should not normally be dealt with by personal email or using personal phone contacts. Only in the most exceptional circumstances, for instance, where there is well-founded concern for the unexplained whereabouts of a student, should pastoral matters be dealt with by personal email or using personal phone contact. In any event, records of all contacts must be kept on the student file so that if it is necessary to use email or personal contact, the reason why will be specified in the written record. It is very difficult to envisage circumstances under which individual texting is appropriate except through official school channels.
- It is not appropriate for students to visit a member of staff in their own home.
- Staff should not consume alcohol whilst in the company of children. This includes educational visits and celebratory functions. There will be occasional situations where alcohol is served either at a meal or school function and in these instances should be approved by the Principal in advance.



- Members of staff who, in the course of their professional duties need to work on a one-to-one basis with a student (for example; a piano lesson or a maths tutorial), in particular one of the opposite sex, must take care to ensure that the circumstances of the meeting or lesson are always entirely professional. Staff are advised to use a room which has vision panels in the door or keep the door open and ensure that colleagues know that the meeting or lesson is taking place. It is helpful if the meeting or lesson can be arranged during normal school hours or immediately before or after school when there are plenty of other people about.
- Staff must avoid threatening words, raised voices and any aggressive contact such as pushing, pulling or hitting, which could amount to, or which could be interpreted as a criminal assault.
- Members of staff do have the right to use reasonable physical force to restrain students to prevent them from committing a criminal offence, injuring others or themselves and damaging property. Current DfE guidance is contained in 'Using Reasonable Force: Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies' and request further guidance and/or training should they require it.
- Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, pose risks for all staff in terms of professional integrity and the welfare of students. Where staff have a professional Twitter account that students are permitted/encouraged to follow, this must clearly be linked to the school and the school email address (personal email addresses must not be used). Staff must not use these sites to contact or communicate with current students or students who have recently left and must not 'follow' students back. Unfortunately, some students post information on their social networking sites which is inappropriate in language or visuals. To view such pages may alter your judgement of students, to be known to be viewing them may alter a student's view of you, and to comment to students about what you have seen is likely to have an impact on your professional reputation as well as possibly causing distress to students concerned. Should you become aware of material about yourself, the school, or a student which is inappropriate, the DSL must be informed, and they will instruct a member of staff to check the allegations and inform the appropriate authorities. You must not check it out yourself.
- If you are at all concerned about anything which has occurred or which has made you uncomfortable, you must add this matter to the StaffSafe CPOMS and make the DSL aware at the earliest opportunity even if it turns out that nothing untoward has happened. You must make a written record, dated, and signed, of any such incident.
- Where any allegation of abuse is made against a teacher, other member of staff or volunteer, Penistone Grammar School is committed to dealing with the allegation fairly, quickly, and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.
- Staff will also find information relevant to staff-student relationships in the following policies and procedures:
 - Code of Conduct
 - Safeguarding (Child Protection)
 - Behaviour
 - Acceptable Use Policy



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