



# HOLMWOOD HOUSE

## INTERACTION WITH PUPILS POLICY CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

### **INTRODUCTION**

The safety and well-being of every pupil at Holmwood House School 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.

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

### **SAFER RECRUITMENT**

Holmwood House School follows the Government's guidelines for the safer employment of staff who work with children. We obtain enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (DBS) certificates on all new members of staff, temporary staff, visiting and peripatetic staff, and contractors' employees, such as catering staff, who work unsupervised in the school. Board of Directors and parent helpers who have regular unsupervised access to children are also required to have up to date DBS certificates. DBS certificates are also required for the adult members of the families of members of staff who are accommodated on site. Where a shadow or gap year student has not reached the age of 18 we regard them as adults within this policy. More details are set out in Policy on Checking Employees, Temporary Workers and Contractors. New staff and the Board of Directors will receive safeguarding and welfare training as part of their induction process. This training is repeated at not more than three yearly intervals but annual / termly updates are given as appropriate.

### **DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD**

Mrs Francesca Bradbury, our Deputy Head, is the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). She has been fully trained for the demands of this role and inter-agency working. She regularly attends courses with other child support agencies to ensure that she remains conversant with best practice. She undergoes refresher training every two years. She reports at least once a year to the Board of Directors on child protection issues.

Mrs Helen Mitchell is the Deputy DSL and is present 24 hours a day onsite. She undergoes the same level of training as the DSL and has the responsibility for training staff during their

induction. Mrs Fiona Taylor, Head of Pre-Prep is also a DSL with specific oversight of the younger children in the school.

We use MyConcerns as our online record keeping system for all safeguarding matters. The school's historical records on child protection are kept locked in the DSL's office, and are separated from routine pupil records. Access is restricted to the DSL and the Headmaster.

### **PROMOTING AWARENESS**

Our curriculum and pastoral systems, enhanced by the element system, 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, support, medical and boarding 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.

Time is allocated in PSHCE to discussions of what constitutes appropriate behaviour and on why bullying and lack of respect for others is never right. Assemblies and RS lessons are used to promote tolerance and mutual respect and understanding. We use opportunities when they arise, such as current news stories, 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. Further reinforcement is effected during Assemblies and Element meetings. Conduct badges are awarded termly for exemplary behaviour.

### **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 talks to their tutor or the nurse, or any other member of staff that they may choose to talk to.

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. 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.

#### **Communication with Pupils**

Staff should not give their personal mobile phone numbers to pupils, nor should they communicate with them by text message or personal email. For essential correspondence, such as the submitting of coursework, school email accounts should be used. If they need to speak to a pupil by telephone, they should use one of the school's telephones. The Group Leader on all trips and visits involving an overnight stay may give pupils their mobile phone number and ask the pupils for their numbers before allowing them out in small, unsupervised groups. The Group leader will ensure any pupil mobile phone numbers are deleted from their

telephones at the end of the trip or visit. They will also ensure that their mobile number is not left on any pupil's telephone.

### **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 and Headmaster 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 Child Line. Details are given in the 'Beat the Bullies' leaflet, the 'No one Supports Bullying' information card, on a display outside the surgery, in the telephone box and in the ICT rooms. 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 DSL 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
- Take what the child says seriously, and calmly, without becoming emotionally involved
- Make it clear why unconditional confidentiality cannot be offered
- Explain that any adult member of staff is obliged to inform the DSL, if child protection or safeguarding issues are involved, in order that specialist help can be arranged
- Encourage the pupil to speak directly to the DSL
- 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 DSL or the Headmaster by the end of the day.
- Inform the Headmaster 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 Headmaster is unavailable, or is involved, the Deputy Head 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 surgery. In serious cases, the Police should be informed from the outset.

## **ROLE OF SCHOOL NURSE**

The nurse in a school operates as all members of staff and have an obligation to refer cases of abuse to the DSL and or the Headmaster.

## **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 DSL and/or the Headmaster will consider how best to support and monitor the pupil concerned through any process of investigation, liaising closely with parents, carers, Local Children's Safeguarding Service, 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 Headmaster. 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 Headmaster 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 DSL, or to the Headmaster.

## **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
- pregnancy

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 at Holmwood House School 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 DSL or the Headmaster, 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 Children's Safeguarding Service.

### **REMEMBER**

Your aim should be to establish as quickly and accurately as possible the details of the injury or abuse. Questioning should be brief and gentle using open rather than closed questions ("How did it happen?" rather than "Did [ ] hit you?"). Keep a note of what you heard and saw.

**BETTER STILL . . . . .** with care and sensitivity, pass the pupil to the DSL or Headmaster immediately.

**The safeguarding and welfare of children are always our top priorities.**

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_AJM\_\_\_\_\_

Date: October 2017