

## Staff Code of Conduct

### ECA Education Consultancy Ltd

This policy applies to all the staff, homestays and volunteers of ECA.

#### **Duty of Care to Children and young people**

- The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989)
- Staff should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which could 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 behave professionally, treat all children with respect and ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse
- The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity
- Staff should continually monitor and review their practice to ensure they follow the guidance contained in this code

#### **Power and position of trust**

- Staff should understand that they are in a position of trust in relation to children under ECA guardianship services, giving them influence and power by virtue of the knowledge they have and/or the authority invested in their role.
- Staff should ensure that their relationships with children clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others
- A relationship between an adult and a child is not a relationship between equals and there is a 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

#### **Professional Judgement**

- On very rare occasions, there may be a time when staff must make a judgement in the best interests of the children in their charge which contravenes this guidance or for which no guidance exists. Such judgements should always be recorded and shared with the Director and management team immediately. The parent or carer must also be informed where necessary. In doing so, individuals will be seen to be acting reasonably. Staff should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe, and applied equitably.

## Sexual Contact

- Staff should not have any form of communication with a child which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, texts, emails or physical contact
- Staff should not make sexual remarks to, or about a child, discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children or have sexual relationships with children. It is an offence for a member of staff to engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of a child to cause or incite that pupil to engage in or watch sexual activity
- Any sexual activity between a member of staff and a child would be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action.

## Language

- Staff should not swear, blaspheme or use offensive language in front of children.
- Staff should not use languages which is discriminatory and demeaning in relation to gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or age
- Staff should not make sexual innuendos or any comments of a sexual nature, nor make any comments trivialising alcohol or drug abuse
- The use of sarcastic, demeaning or insensitive comments towards young people can also be regarded as a form of abuse which is potentially very damaging and must be avoided
- It is recognised that, in order to discharge particular pastoral responsibilities, staff may from time to time need to engage in conversation with children which covers sensitive matters. Staff must use their professional judgement to ensure that they are not drawn into areas inappropriate to their duties or their relationship with the students concerned. In circumstances where such conversations occur, staff must notify the director and management team immediately

## One-to-One Situations

- One-to-one situations have the potential to make children more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust
- Staff may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them
- When one-to-one situations occur, reasonable and sensible precautions must be taken to ensure the safety and security of children and Staff alike
- Permission for private tuition both on and off site must be sought from the ECA director and management team during school holidays. This is an extra layer of protection for both the child and the member of staff
- Staff should never invite a child into their room when on overnight or extended trips.

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## Communication and Contact with Children

- All communication and contact between pupils and adults should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.
- Staff should also be circumspect in their communications and contact with pupils so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.
- Staff should share concerns with the appropriate member of staff, the director and the management team of the company.
- The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures should be followed in all case relating to safeguarding issues.

## Transporting pupils

- Staff should not transport pupils in their own vehicle other than on approved arrangement with permission of the director and parents or in the case of emergency.
- A member of staff should never be alone in a vehicle with a child.
- Wherever possible and practicable, transport should be in a vehicle other than a private vehicle, with

at least one adult additional to the driver acting as an escort

## Care of distressed students

- If it is necessary to be alone with a child, this should, ideally, be in a place in full view of others
- If a child is injured or upset, appropriate comforting is a natural reaction. In full view of others, this is fine but staff should be aware that in a one to one situation, such comforting may be open to misinterpretation
- Be aware that an upset child might readily misconstrue a situation and, if possible, always ensure that the child is accompanied by a friend
- When investigating allegations of e.g. bullying, it is wise to invite another member of staff or witness to attend, so that the child feels supported. This will also act as protection from misinterpretation.
- responding to individual children's distress, staff will need to consider carefully whether they should offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer them to a colleague or agency better placed to offer appropriate advice

## Physical Contact with Pupils

Given the age of the pupils, physical contact between children and staff may be appropriate. Staff must exercise common sense when with the children in their care and should make sure any physical contact is appropriate to the situation. Staff should never have any physical contact with a child which could be misinterpreted. Some incidences where physical contact may be necessary/unavoidable are:

- First Aid – staff who administer First Aid should, where possible, ensure that another adult is present if there is any doubt over the possibility of any physical contact being misconstrued
- Comforting a child who is upset or unwell
- Helping a child who has soiled their clothing

## An outright ban on any corporal punishment

- All staff with responsibility for children's safety and welfare must deal professionally with all incidents involving aggressive behaviour and only use physical intervention as a last resort, always ensuring minimal risk of injury to students and staff. **Corporal punishment and the threat of corporal punishment are prohibited. Staff must never shout at, humiliate or use sarcasm with children.**

## Social Contact with pupils, parents, staff at partner schools

- Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with children for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship
- If a student or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of Staff should exercise his or her professional judgement in making a response
- Some social contacts will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged, for example when the parent and Staff are part of the same social circle. Nevertheless, Staff should be aware that some social contacts be misconstrued as being part of a grooming process
- It is recognised that Staff can support a parent who may be in particular difficulty; however, care needs to be exercised in situations where the parent comes to depend on the member of staff for support outside their professional role. These situations should be discussed with the director of ECA and, where necessary, referrals made to the appropriate support agency.
- Staff should never arrange meetings with individual pupils, parents, staff from partner schools off the business premises without the prior approval of the director.
- Staff should never take children on overnight trips alone.
- Staff should not arrange tuition on the ECA business's premises of any student without the prior approval of the Director.
- Staff should not give students their home address, home telephone number, mobile phone number, or non-School e-mail address unless it is for homestay arrangement and for the purpose of communication for the homestays during holiday time.
- Staff should not make arrangements to meet pupils, individually or in groups outside School.

- Staff are advised not to attend private pupil parties and should be aware of their professional standing and responsibilities when attending parties arranged by parents at which pupils are also present

### **Gifts, Rewards and Favours**

- Staff should be aware that consistently conferring special attention and favour upon a student might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process and as such will give rise to concerns about their behaviour
- Staff should not give presents to an individual student This could be a form of grooming
- Staff should take care to ensure they do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment. Please refer to the **Anti-Bribery Policy**.
- It is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value.
- Gifts given or received in situations which may be misconstrued must be declared to the Bursar.

### **Searching and Confiscation**

- There may be times when a member of staff needs to search a student or a student's belonging's because something has gone missing and there are reasonable grounds to conduct a search. In such circumstances staff must follow the guidelines set out in the **Searching and Confiscation Policy**.

### **Student Confidentiality**

- Staff may have access to confidential or personal information about students the process of undertaking their everyday responsibilities. They should never use this information for their own or others' advantage (including that of partners, friends, relatives or other schools/services). Confidential information about a student should never be used casually in conversation or shared with any person other than on a need-to-know basis and never be used to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass the pupil.
- Information about students, parents must never be disclosed to telephone enquirers. Staff should ask the enquirer to put the request in writing so that it can be dealt with appropriately.
- 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 on information without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities. If in doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential, staff should seek guidance from Director of ECA or the management team.

## **Use of Personal Mobile Phones (Use of photographs and videos)**

***ECA recognises that personal mobile phones have the potential to be used inappropriately. Mobile phones should never be used to take photographs of or video children.***

### **See Use of Mobile Phones Policy.**

The term 'phone' in this policy denotes mobiles phones, iPods, iPads, MP3, MP4 players, cameras and any similar portable electronic devices. This policy also contains guidance specific to EYFS.

Use of Technology, Electronic Communications and Storage of Images

- Staff must ensure that they establish safe and responsible behaviours in their use of electronic communications and when online.
- Staff should have a thorough knowledge of the ECA 's Cyberbullying Policy.
- Staff must log off when they leave a computer.
- Staff must never allow visitors to use their log on details.
- Staff should keep social networking profiles private and refrain from joining groups that are directly linked to ECA Education Consultancy Ltd
- Staff should refrain from making comments about ECA or discussing ECA on their personal social media networks
- Students and ex-students under the age of 18 should not be 'friends' or 'contacts'. Staff should have no online contact with ex pupils under the age of 18
- Staff with their own website should keep private details off the website and guard against giving out information which could bring the ECA into disrepute
- Email exchanges with students should be for professional purposes only, using the company email system alone, with the use of appropriate formal language and salutations. Staff should be aware that any email can be forwarded (or if deleted can be retrieved), so should think before sending
- When using e-mail, Staff need to be aware of the less formal style that can characterise this form of communication and ensure that e-mails do not convey an inappropriate tone.
- Staff should never photograph students using their own cameras unless using a memory card provided by the company. Best practice is to book a camera in advance. All photographs taken of the children should be uploaded on ECA computers only.
- It is not appropriate for Staff to take images of pupils for their personal use. However, working with children may 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 children.
- When taking photographs, Staff need to remain sensitive to students who appear uncomfortable and should recognise the potential for such activities to raise concerns or lead to misunderstandings
- Images should be stored securely on school hardware and be used only by Staff authorised to do so. When images are used, the pupils in them should not be named