



# **PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS POLICY 2024**

## **1. Introduction**

At Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College we believe that all staff and students are members of a learning community where everyone deserves respect, where we all have rights and responsibilities and where we all achieve most when we work in partnership.

## **2. Aims and Principles**

The Professionals Relations Policy is designed to underpin the standards of conduct for both staff and students and to foster clear professional boundaries as part of the school's commitment to student safety and the well-being of staff.

The policy is not exhaustive and does not attempt to describe every potential interaction, either professional or personal, between staff and students. Staff are required to exercise judgement at all times and to ensure that their conduct both in work and in their personal lives does not conflict with their role or professional duties.

## **3. Scope and Application**

It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

This policy applies to all employees and workers at the school including those engaged via supply agencies or on contracts for service.

Application of the policy to staff whose own children are students at the school will be subject to reasonable interpretation and individual exemptions. Staff in this position should discuss any concerns with the Headteacher.

## **4. Relationships with students**

### **4.1 Teaching Groups**

Good relationships with students are at the heart of effective teaching and learning. All members of staff should ensure that their actions demonstrate high expectations and clear professional standards.

Good practice includes punctuality for lessons, well planned lessons, assertiveness in the classroom situation e.g. seating plans for students, appropriately planned work and homework. These should be accompanied by clear follow-up if expectations are not fulfilled.

### **4.2 Individual students**

All members of staff should insist that they are addressed by students by their proper name e.g. Mrs..... Mr..... Students should not be allowed to address staff by their first name or nickname.

Members of staff should not accept invitations to informal social occasions with their students, nor should they attend student parties unless these are family events and they have been specifically invited by the family. It is advisable to record attendance at such events in advance with a member of SLT in advance. Any member of staff arranging to meet a student(s) outside school (e.g. meeting sixth formers at a theatre) should follow the procedure for school trips and gain authorisation from the Headteacher.

Staff who accompany students on residential activities must maintain their professional standing at all times and not be compromised by informal contact with students.

Members of staff on such activities have a duty of care to students at all times and must be able to exercise full responsibility for students when required. This may be at very short notice in an emergency.

Where members of staff have a responsibility to listen, support and advise students they should make no promises of complete confidentiality and must be cautious of students repeatedly seeking advice and support leading to dependency upon the member of staff.

All disclosures regarding issues of child protection should be reported immediately, without investigation or prejudice, to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead. Depending on the context, staff may wish to use the school's safeguarding recording software to do this. **However, if the incident or concern is about staff conduct and cannot be appropriately linked to students, staff should make the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead aware of their concerns as soon as possible.** If the concern is about any of these colleagues, representations should be made to the Chair of Governors or the CEO of the Sandstone Trust.

Other personal disclosures should be recorded and passed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

## 5. Communications with students

### 5.1 General Communication

Any private communication with an individual student concerning issues personal to the student should be recorded and copied to the student's file.

Personal telephone numbers, including mobile numbers should not be shared with students, other than in emergency situations. If a student continues to use these personal contacts, this should be reported immediately to one of the deputy headteachers.

Improper communication between a member of staff and a student is likely to result in disciplinary action.

### 5.2 Electronic Communication

No digital communication should take place between a member of staff and a student outside school email or the school's virtual learning environment. In the event of this happening, it should be recorded and placed on the student's file and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as is possible.

Staff should not participate in chat rooms, messaging or social networking sites with any students irrespective of age. This applies to any Year 11 leavers until they are 18. The same applies to former sixth form students for at least a year after they have left school. Any communication in that year must be via school email systems e.g. former students visiting, alumni activities, supporting UCAS applications. Staff should be mindful of the impact on younger siblings or friends of former students in any social contact.

Members of staff using social networking sites in a personal capacity should ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the school. This will include:

- Not allowing interaction on websites to damage or compromise working relationships with colleagues
- Not posting photographs of themselves, colleagues or students taken in school
- Never posting or sending abusive or defamatory messages
- Never recording any confidential information about school on any social networking site
- Never posting information which will disclose the identity of a student.

Accessing social networking sites during school time should be in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy, any breach of which may be a disciplinary issue.

## **6. Improper Behaviour**

Members of staff should take care not to put themselves at risk of accusations of improper behaviour towards students. They should be cautious when seeing a student alone in a room and should ensure they are fully visible to anyone passing, through a viewing panel or open door if necessary.

Members of staff should only take photographs or video students in accordance with school policy.

Members of staff should be very cautious when comforting a distressed student and offering any level of physical contact. All physical contact should be age appropriate.

Staff should not normally give lifts to students. In the event that a lift is necessary for the safety of students this should be reported to and approved by a member of the Senior Leadership Team with this action recorded at Reception as soon as possible after the event.

No member of staff should enter into an intimate (physical or emotional) relationship with a student. This will compromise their professional standing with the individual student and the wider student population. Such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action.

Sexual activity with a student of any age or former student under the age of 18 is a criminal offence as members of staff are in a position of trust. Any member of staff conducting such a relationship will be liable to disciplinary proceedings for gross misconduct.

Members of staff should not disclose inappropriate private details about their personal lives or own activities.

## **7 Relationships with parents and families**

Members of staff should be conscious of any potential conflict in social relationships with parents or families of students or where their own children or children of relatives attend school.

## **8 Dress and appearance**

The school recognises that dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, members of staff should dress in ways which are appropriate to their role and the tasks they undertake; are not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative; does not distract students or cause embarrassment and is not considered to be

discriminatory and is culturally sensitive. The headteacher's judgement in this area is final and colleagues must respond to advice they may receive from SLT.

## **9 Definitions**

Not Applicable.

## **10 See also**

Teacher Standards – Part Two: Personal and Professional Conduct;  
Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People;  
Tarpoley High School and Sixth Form College's Acceptable Use Policy.

**Reviewed and approved by the safeguarding governor: Autumn 2023**

**Approved by Governing Body: 14.12.23**

**Date of next review: January 2025**