

Guidance for Staff on Appropriate Conduct and Behaviour Policy

This policy should be read in context with OMG Education's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- IT Security Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

1.1 This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is or is not appropriate behaviour for adults in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which adults have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the child or young person, which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists.

- Individuals are expected to make judgments about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge.
- Such judgments, in these circumstances, should always be recorded and shared with a senior manager. In undertaking these actions, individuals will be seen to be acting reasonably.

1.2 Adults should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe and applied equitably. This means that where no specific guidance exists, adults should:

- Discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with a senior manager, or with the parent/carer if not working for an organisation
- Report any actions which could be misinterpreted to their senior manager
- Always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior manager
- Always record discussions and reasons why actions were taken.
- Record any areas of disagreement about the course of action taken and, if necessary, refer to a higher authority

2. Underpinning Principles

2.1 The welfare of the child is paramount (Children Act 1989).

2.2 It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This responsibility extends to a duty of care for those adults employed, commissioned or contracted to work with children and young people.

2.3 Adults who work with children 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

2.4 Adults should work and be seen to work in an open and transparent way.

2.5 Adults should continually monitor and review their practice.

2.6 The same professional standards should always be applied and should be sensitive to differences expressed through culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.

3. Duty of Care

3.1 All adults who work with and on behalf of children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources, and safeguard children and young people. Whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity, these adults have a duty to keep children and young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm. Please see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for the specific duty of care the Academy and each member of staff has towards young people.

3.2 Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. It follows that trusted adults are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people. Failure to do so may be regarded as neglect. The duty of care is, in part, exercised through the development of respectful and caring relationships between adults and children and young people. It is also exercised through the behaviour of the adult, which at all times should demonstrate integrity, maturity and good judgment. Everyone expects high standards of behaviour from adults who work with children and young people. When individuals accept such work, they need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role. This means that adults should:

- Understand the responsibilities, which are part of their employment or role, and be aware that sanctions will be applied if these provisions are breached
- Always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests
- Avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question your motivation and intentions
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour

4. Power and Positions of Trust

4.1 As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. Broadly speaking, a relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. It is vital for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of this relationship. This means that adults should not:

- Use their position to gain access to information for their own or others' advantage
- Use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children or young people
- Use their status and standing to form or promote relationships which are of a sexual nature, or which may become so

5. Propriety and Behaviour

5.1 All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of the public in general and all those with whom they work. This means that adults should not:

- Behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model.
- Make, or encourage others to make, unprofessional personal comments which scapegoat, demean, or humiliate, or which might be interpreted as such
- This means that adults should:
 - Be aware that behaviour in their personal lives may impact their work with children and young people
 - Understand that the behaviour and actions of their partner (or other family members) may raise questions about their suitability to work with children and young people

6. Relationships between colleagues

6.1 OMG is neutral on the matter of colleagues entering into personal relationships with each other. Should they occur, however, such relationships should be conducted entirely outside of the work environment. Any contact or conduct of a personal or intimate nature should not occur in the work environment or during working hours. This means that adults should not:

- a) Make any advance towards a colleague, whether including physical contact or not, that could give rise to misunderstanding or be misconstrued as inappropriate
- b) Attempt to touch a colleague in a manner that could give rise to misunderstanding or be misconstrued as inappropriate
- c) Attempt to initiate a personal relationship with a colleague in the work environment or during working hours

7. Dress and Appearance

7.1 A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self-expression. However, adults should dress in ways which are appropriate to their role, and this may need to be different to how they dress when not at work.

Adults who work with children and young people should ensure they dress appropriately for the tasks and the work they undertake.

Those who dress in a manner which could be considered inappropriate could render themselves vulnerable to criticism or allegations. This means that adults should wear clothing which:

- a) Is appropriate to their role
- b) Is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing, or sexually provocative
- c) Does not distract, cause embarrassment or give rise to misunderstanding
- d) Is free of any political or otherwise contentious slogans
- e) Is not considered to be discriminatory and is culturally sensitive

8. Personal Living Space

8.1 No child or young person should be in or invited into the home of an adult who works with them, unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents/ carers and senior managers. This means that adults should:

- Be vigilant in maintaining their privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations
- Challenge any request for their accommodation to be used as an additional resource for the organisation
- Be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries
- Refrain from asking children and young people to undertake personal jobs or errands

9. Gifts, Rewards and Favouritism

9.1 The giving of gifts or rewards to children or young people should be part of an agreed policy for supporting positive behaviour or recognising particular achievements. Adults need to be aware, however, that the giving of gifts can be misinterpreted by others as a gesture either to bribe or groom a young person.

9.2 Adults should exercise care when selecting children and/or young people for specific activities or privileges to avoid perceptions of favouritism or unfairness. Methods and criteria for selection should always be transparent and subject to scrutiny. Care should also be taken to ensure that adults do not accept any gift that might be construed as a bribe by others or lead the giver to expect preferential treatment.

9.3 There are occasions when children, young people or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to adults, e.g. on special occasions or as a thank-you, and this is acceptable. However, it is unacceptable to receive gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value. This means that adults should:

- Ensure that gifts received or given in situations which may be misconstrued are declared
- Generally, only give gifts to a young individual as part of an agreed-upon reward system
- When giving gifts other than as above, ensure that these are of insignificant value
- Ensure that all selection processes which concern children and young people are fair and that, wherever practicable, these are undertaken and agreed by more than one member of staff

10. Infatuations

10.1 Occasionally, a child or young person may develop an infatuation with an adult who works with them. These adults should deal with these situations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned. They should remain aware, however, that such infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and should therefore make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour is above reproach.

10.2 An adult who becomes aware that a child or young person is developing an infatuation should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior manager or parent/carer so appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment. This means that adults should:

- Report and record any incidents or indications (verbal, written or physical) that suggest a child or young person may have developed an infatuation with an adult in the workplace
- Always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries

11. Communication with Children and Young People

11.1 Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a child or young person. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child/young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

11.2 Adults should also be cautious in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. They should not give their personal contact details to children and young people, including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management for the purposes of communication linked to course attendance and punctuality. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a young child outside agreed-upon protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet-based websites. Internal e-mail systems should only be used in accordance with the organisation's policy. This means that adults should:

- Use the equipment provided by the organisation to communicate with children
- Only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any organisation policy
- Recognise that text messaging is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible
- Not use the internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person

11.3 Contact with young people via personal social media accounts is prohibited for safeguarding reasons. We highly recommend and encourage staff to ensure personal social media accounts are set with security settings. Any known requests for learners to join personal social media accounts should be blocked. Where security settings are not used, staff must ensure that content is appropriate and does not compromise the relationship they have with learners as a member of staff. The company recognises that many staff are dual practitioners and may have businesses relevant to the students; if this is the case, students may follow these business accounts as long as personal information is not shared in any way. Staff may not follow learners back, make any contact via social media or share any images of learners. OMG has various company social media pages, which students should be encouraged to link with (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). Staff should pass on to the marketing team all relevant opportunities and content to be shared on the company accounts. For further information, please see the IT Security Policy and Online Safety Policy. Instances of staff interacting with young people via social media will be investigated under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

12. Social Contact

12.1 Adults who work with children and young people should not seek to have social contact with them or their families, unless the reason for this contact has been firmly established and agreed with senior managers. If a child or parent seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally,

the adult should exercise her/his professional judgment in making a response but should always discuss the situation with their manager or with the parent of the child or young person. Adults should be aware that social contact in certain situations can be misconstrued as grooming. This means that adults should:

- Have no secret social contact with children and young people or their parents
- Consider the appropriateness of the social contact according to their role and the nature of their work
- Always approve any planned social contact with children or parents with senior colleagues,
- Advise senior management of any social contact they have with a child or a parent with whom they work, which may give rise to concern
- Report and record any situation which may place a child at risk or which may compromise the organisation or their own professional standing
- Be aware that the sending of personal communications such as birthday or faith cards should always be recorded and/or discussed with the line manager.
- Understand that some communications may be called into question and need to be justified.

13. Sexual Contact

13.1 All adults should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their contacts with children and young people. Intimate or sexual relationships between children/young people and the adults who work with them will be regarded as a grave breach of trust. Allowing or encouraging a relationship to develop in a way which might lead to a sexual relationship is also unacceptable.

13.2 Any sexual activity between an adult and the child or young person with whom they work may be regarded as a criminal offence and will always be a matter for disciplinary action.

13.3 There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child, and manipulate that relationship so sexual abuse can take place. Adults should be aware that consistently conferring inappropriate special attention and favour upon a child might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process and, as such, will give rise to concerns about their behaviour. This means that adults should not:

- a) Have sexual relationships with children and young people
- b) Have any form of communication with a child or young person which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative, i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, physical contact
- c) Make sexual remarks to, or about, a child/young person
- d) Discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of children or young people

This means that adults should:

- a) Ensure that their relationships with children and young people clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship
- b) Take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation
- c) Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought,
- d) particularly when members of staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

14. Physical Contact

- 14.1 There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate for other adults to have some physical contact with the child or young person with whom they are working. However, it is crucial that in all circumstances, adults should only touch children in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed-upon role and responsibilities.
- 14.2 When physical contact is made with a child, this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child in one set of circumstances may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. Adults, nevertheless, should use their professional judgment at all times, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and – so far as is possible - use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the child for the minimum time necessary.
- 14.3 Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If an adult believes that their action could be misinterpreted, or if an action is observed by another as being inappropriate or possibly abusive, the incident and circumstances should be reported to the senior manager outlined in the procedures for handling allegations and an appropriate record made. Parents/carers should also be informed in such circumstances.
- 14.4 Where a child seeks or initiates inappropriate physical contact with an adult, the situation should be handled sensitively and care taken to ensure that contact is not exploited in any way. Careful consideration must be given to the needs of the child and advice and support given to the adult concerned.
- 14.5 It is recognised that some children who have experienced abuse may seek inappropriate physical contact. Adults should be particularly aware of this when it is known that a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to some actions being misinterpreted. In all circumstances where a child or young person initiates inappropriate physical contact, it is the responsibility of the adult to sensitively deter the child and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries. Such circumstances must always be reported and discussed with a senior manager and the parent/carer. This means that adults should:
- Be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described
 - Never touch a child in a way which may be considered indecent
 - Always be prepared to report and explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny
 - Not indulge in horseplay
 - Work within Health and Safety regulations
 - Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching, and always be sensitive to issues of gender
 - Understand that physical contact in some circumstances can be easily misinterpreted

15. Behaviour Management

15.1 All children and young people have a right to be treated with respect and dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult or challenging behaviour. Adults should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children and young people is not acceptable in any situation.

15.2 The use of corporal punishment is not acceptable under any circumstances. Where children display difficult or challenging behaviour, adults must follow the behaviour policy and use strategies appropriate to the circumstance and situation. This means that adults should:

- Not use force as a form of punishment
- Try to defuse situations before they escalate
- Adhere to the organisation's behaviour management policy
- Be mindful of factors which may impact upon a child or young person's behaviour, e.g. bullying, abuse and, where necessary, take appropriate action

16. One-to-One Situations

16.1 One-to-one situations have the potential to make a child/young person more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust. Adults working in one-to-one settings with children and young people may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them. Both possibilities should be recognised so that when one-to-one situations are unavoidable, reasonable and sensible precautions are taken. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security of children and young people and the adults who work with them.

16.2 Meetings with children and young people outside agreed working arrangements should not take place without the agreement of senior managers and parents or carers. This means that adults should:

- a. Avoid one-to-one meetings with a child or young person outside of normal working arrangements,
- b. Always inform other colleagues and/or parents/carers about the contact(s) beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by
- c. Avoid use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs wherever possible. Such signs may create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy
- d. Always leave the door open when in a one-to-one situation with a child or young person
- e. Always report any situation where a child becomes distressed or angry to a senior colleague
- f. Carefully consider the needs and circumstances of the child/children when in one-to-one situations

17. Home Visits

17.1 Under no circumstances should an adult visit a child in their home outside agreed work arrangements or invite a child to their own home or that of a family member, colleague or friend. If in an emergency, such a one-off arrangement is required, the adult must have a prior discussion with a senior manager and the parents or carers and a clear justification for such arrangement is agreed and recorded. These mean that adults should:

- Agree on the purpose of any home visit with senior management

- Always make detailed records, including times of arrival and departure, and work undertaken. This information is to be kept and stored on the shared Google Workspace.
- Ensure any behaviour or situation which gives rise to concern is discussed with their manager and, where appropriate, action is taken

18. Transporting Children and Young People

18.1 Under normal circumstances, adults should not offer or provide lifts to a child or young person. However, there may be rare occasions when not giving a lift may place a child at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to a senior manager and parents/carers. This means that adults should:

- a) Ensure they are fit to drive and free from any drugs, alcohol or medicine which is likely to impair judgment and/ or ability to drive
- b) Be aware that the safety and welfare of the child is their responsibility until they are safely passed over to a parent/carer
- c) Record details of the journey
- d) Ensure that their behaviour is appropriate at all times
- e) Ensure that there are proper arrangements in place to ensure vehicle, passenger and driver safety. This includes having proper and appropriate insurance for the type of vehicle being driven
- f) Ensure that any emergency arrangements for lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned

Declaration:

I acknowledge that I have read, and do hereby accept, the terms and conditions contained in this document:

Employee Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____