



Havering Sixth Form College

Policy: Personal Relationships between Staff & Students

Aim: to set out the general principles and responsibilities with regard to professional and personal relationships between both teaching & Support Staff & Students

Date: November 2008

1. Context

Havering Sixth Form College has a responsibility for the welfare of its staff & students and aims to provide a working environment in which the agency of students is maximised and staff / student relationships are developed in order to improve teaching & learning (SO2). The College takes great pride in the friendly and professional atmosphere which has developed over the years and which has been recognised by the AoC in a recent visit. This atmosphere contributes enormously to an effective and enjoyable learning environment.

- 1.1 The college recognises that in a healthy working environment, staff (teaching & support) & students will form mutually rewarding personal relationships. Indeed the college encourages this. However, in order to protect staff & students, the boundaries of personal & professional life must be fully recognised and respected.
- 1.2 The college fully respects and complies with all acts of parliament and guidelines issued by government & local authorities with regard to the protection and safeguarding of all young people in the college.
- 1.3 Any relationship which could impair professional judgement, compromise integrity or affect the proper teaching or reputation of the college should be avoided.

2. General Principles

All adults working with young people are in positions of trust as a result of the authority invested in their role. This cannot be a relationship of equals. Appropriate professional boundaries must be maintained.

- 2.1 There are many situations which occur on a regular basis which require a good relationship between staff & students. The college regards itself as a 'half-

way house' between school and the workplace or Higher Education, a 'Learning Institution' and as such, relationships of mutual respect are encouraged where an honest rapport can develop. Everyday examples of such situations could be;

- Explaining grades awarded in Half Term Reports
 - Explaining grades awarded in UCAS applications and comments made in references
 - Discussing progress at a Parents' Evening or at Personal Tutor or Subject Review
- 2.2 The college encourages staff to be open and honest at all times with students in terms of their progress on the course. Comments must be able to be backed up by the appropriate data / records.
- 2.3 The college disciplinary policy applies at all times and its implementation may be required in cases where the student fails to respect the rules and regulations of the college which are designed to ensure respect between staff & students. The highest value is placed on the college's Code of Respect.
- 2.4 Whilst encouraging a mature and profitable relationship between staff and students, it is important to recognise that there are boundaries which cannot be crossed. Staff and current students cannot be friends in the true sense of that word. Any relationship other than a professional one is totally unacceptable.
- 2.5 All staff should behave in a professional manner and should ensure that their actions or personal conduct, no matter how well intended, do not cause offence or allow themselves to be easily open to misinterpretation.
- 2.6 Any relationship of a romantic or sexual nature is illegal and is a grave breach of trust. Such a relationship could cause very serious disruption and result in legal action being taken against the member of staff concerned and / or the college. Havering Sixth Form College has a clear policy of fully assisting the Police with any enquiries pertaining to the college or members thereof. Infatuations do occur occasionally on the part of a student towards a member of staff. In such situations the member of staff concerned must make every effort to remain above reproach and must discuss the situation with a senior manager as soon as possible. It may become necessary to discuss matters with the student's parents or carer in order to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment. The member of staff should ensure that they never allow themselves to be alone with the student concerned.

3 Disclosure of Staff / Student Relationship

- 3.2 In the event of a relationship developing with a student, the member of staff concerned is required to declare this either to his/her Subject Sector Leader, Senior Tutor, Human Resources Officer or any member of the Executive immediately. The Deputy Principal (Human Resources) must also be informed immediately.

- 3.3 Where the member of staff concerned is a member of the Executive then the Principal must be informed.
- 3.4 Where the member of staff concerned is the Principal then the Chair of the Corporation must be informed.
- 3.5 Once the declaration has been made, the appropriate Manager, Principal, Chair of Corporation should determine the appropriate action to be taken, ensuring that the member of staff concerned is not involved in any way in the teaching, supervision or invigilation of the student concerned. The Manager, Principal or Chair concerned must ensure that the parents and, where appropriate, relevant authorities are informed of what has transpired. In addition measures must be taken to minimise the effect of any known situation within the staff & students of the college. Any press contact is dealt with solely by the Principal or the Chair of Corporation.

4 Specific Situations

- 4.2 *Dress & Appearance* – staff should ensure that they are dressed appropriately for the work undertaken in the college. Please note the college dress standards.
- 4.3 *Gifts, Rewards & Favouritism* – there are occasions when young people or their parents wish to pass on some token of appreciation to a member of staff and this is acceptable. Receiving gifts on a regular basis or of any significant value is however unacceptable.
- 4.4 *Communication with students and the use of new technologies* - the development of new technologies has created many new possibilities for communication. However, all communication between staff & students must take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. Outside the classroom situation this means:
 - College e-mail system (in accordance with the college policy)
 - Phone calls home or to the student's mobile
 - Letters

No other form of communication is acceptable, including the use of personal mobiles & e-mail addresses, internet based websites (eg Facebook) & chatrooms. Personal contact details should never be given to a student at the college unless the need to do so is agreed with a member of the Executive.
- 4.5 *Social Contact* – in a Sixth Form College situations arise where members of staff find themselves in social situations with students, eg on a residential or day trip. It is important to maintain the usual accepted standards of behaviour between staff & students and to abide by any relevant legal

framework. Apart from these situations, staff should endeavour to avoid such social interaction to avoid matters being misconstrued. Where social contact is an integral part of work duties, care should be taken to maintain appropriate personal & professional boundaries.

- 4.6 *Physical Contact* – certain jobs within the college and certain specific situations may require entirely appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a student, eg First Aiders, PE staff and the Care Team being obvious examples. However, it is crucial that that in all circumstances, adults should only touch young people in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities. Professional judgement is key in every situation and being specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact is difficult as circumstances change according to age, gender, cultural background. When trying to calm a distressed student, a member of staff should comfort the student in an age & gender-appropriate manner. Where frequent physical contact is necessary, eg with certain disabled students, the prerequisite protocols will be included in the Care Plan and the member of staff concerned will have received the appropriate training. Intimate care will only be carried out by trained members of the Care Team. Staff administering First Aid need to be sensitive to the privacy and feelings of the student concerned. Another adult should be made aware of the administration of any First Aid. Parents must be informed of the administration of First Aid.
- 4.7 *Behaviour Management & Physical Contact* – Students have a right to be treated with respect & dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult or challenging behaviour. Staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to punish a student. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards a student is not acceptable in any situation. Any physical contact is prohibited unless there is a direct and present danger to someone in the vicinity. Even in these circumstances restraint must be measured. Corporal punishment is illegal. Where a member of staff suspects that a student is in possession of a weapon or an illegal substance, a senior manager should be called who will then take control of the situation.
- 4.8 *One-to-One Situations* – These occur regularly for all staff and every effort must be made to avoid either the member of staff or the student starting to feel ill at ease or vulnerable. When a member of staff feels that One-to-One situations are inappropriate with a particular student, it is the member of staff's responsibility to ensure that they are not alone with the student. Their Line Manager will support them in this.
- 4.9 *Home Visits* – related risk assessments should take place before a home visit is made. Parents must be aware of the visit and another responsible adult must be present alongside the member of staff. The visiting member of staff must have the permission of their line manager for the visit, the reason for which must be clear and evident.

- 4.10 *Transporting Young People* – there may be occasions where a young person requires transport in an emergency situation or where not to give a lift may place a young person at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to a senior manager and / or parents.
- 4.11 *Trips & Outings* – these need to be conducted in accordance with the college policy
- 4.12 *Photography & Videos* – these need to be conducted in accordance with the college policy and an explicit disclaimer on the part of the student / parents is essential.