

# KAIKORAI VALLEY COLLEGE



## PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES PROCEDURE (in conjunction with Safe Schools Procedure)

### Rationale

Secondary school teaching is a professional occupation. Teachers are bound by professional standards contained in the Secondary School Teachers' Collective Agreement (Supplement 1), the New Zealand Education Council registration criteria and the New Zealand Education Council Code of Ethics for Teachers. Teachers should also be guided by common sense and that they are the adult in the student/teacher relationship.

The [College] Board of Trustees have a clear expectation that teachers at the school will at all times maintain the highest professional standards and conduct. An important element in professional standards is maintaining professional boundaries between teachers and students.

A teacher is in a position of trust and power. Their actions must always be guided by the principle of what is in the best interests of the students.

### Purpose

- To ensure that all staff are fully aware of the importance of professional boundaries between themselves and students as part of their professional practice and to keep themselves and students safe.
- To identify behaviour and practices which could undermine those professional boundaries and lead to the teacher student relationship being compromised.
- To identify the adverse consequences, including disciplinary, which could occur if professional boundaries are not maintained.

### Guidelines

- Staff new to the College will receive advice on professional boundaries as part of the induction process. A copy of this procedure shall be included in the staff handbook.
- Building positive relationships with students is a key ingredient to successful teaching and learning. This relationship should be based on mutual trust, respect and focused on students' academic and pastoral needs.
- There is an important distinction between being friendly with students, which is commendable, and 'being their friend' which is to be avoided.
- Teachers are employed predominantly to deliver the curriculum and assess students. This process should take place in an atmosphere of encouragement, good humour, enthusiasm and positive reflection.

- Counsellors are employed specially to offer counselling services to students.
- Each member of staff has a specific role in a school eg teacher, Dean, Counsellor. It is essential that you work within your own job description and respect the expertise of others.

### **Unsafe Behaviour/Practices (Keeping yourself and students safe)**

The following behaviours and practices should be avoided as they have the potential to undermine professional boundaries and could give rise to complaints:-

1. Hugging or touching students is not appropriate. Staff must avoid this to keep themselves safe.
2. Adding current students as friends or contacts on social media such as Facebook for social purposes. It is preferable to use another Facebook page for professional communication, if necessary.
3. Texting students with personal comments, particularly in the evenings, weekends or school holidays.
4. Texting, messaging or contacting students for purposes other than school related matters.
5. Teachers will NOT post photos of students on any social media sites other than an official school website or facebook page. Students should be informed before anything is posted. Teachers should always check that no student is included in such postings where the school has been made aware that this should not happen.
6. If you are conducting an activity with one student, other staff and the student's parents should be made aware of it and it should take place in an open and public setting where there is no risk of allegations being made..
7. Giving advice to students outside the teachers area of expertise e.g. depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual health, family relationship issues (they should be referred to the Guidance Department).
8. Making inappropriate comments or engaging in conversation with students on such topics as dating, their attractiveness, social life, etc.
9. Allowing students into your classroom or office for social reasons.
10. Discussing with students your own marital or personal problems.
11. If transporting a student in your vehicle, the student should be in the back seat. Ideally, another adult should be in the vehicle with you, if possible..
12. Socialising with students particularly at pubs, nightclubs, parties or allowing them to visit your home.

13. Giving or accepting expensive or intimate gifts from students.

14. If you need to see a student, endeavour to have a group present and be visible - this however is dependent on the context.

### **Consequences of Unsafe Practices**

- Engaging in unsafe practices or behaviour of the type described above can diminish the professional reputation and standing of the teacher.
- They can lead to complaints from students, parents and colleagues.
- More serious breaches can lead to formal complaints to the Board of Trustees, Ministry of Education or New Zealand Teachers Council. If the complaints are upheld, they could result in disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal and deregistration.

### **Review Process**

This policy shall be reviewed every three years after the first year.

Date of Confirmation by the Board of Trustees	24 October 2012
Reviewed	25 May 2016
Reviewed	24 February 2020