



Education &
Communities

Professional Learning
and Leadership
Development Directorate

A guide for teaching and protecting children and young people (school version)



Child protection awareness training

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SCHOOL VERSION: A GUIDE FOR TEACHING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The following suggestions will help teachers identify appropriate professional practice in their conduct with students. The material below is not exhaustive but is provided as a guide to common situations.

GOOD OR ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE

School and classroom culture

- develop school and classroom routines or structures that have clear boundaries of acceptable and professional student/teacher interaction
- implement Department and school guidelines that help prepare and plan such educational activities as excursions. Professional behaviour and supervision levels need to take into account the age of students and the educational context
- know the school's student welfare and discipline policies and use behaviour reinforcement strategies that follow these policies
- develop a non-confrontational behaviour management style
- respond to provocative behaviour by students, parents or members of the school community in a non-confrontational, calm manner to help defuse difficult situations. Seek support from colleagues or supervisors where needed. In extreme situations the principal can call police to protect staff and students. Strategies including the use of Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 can also be used, and Apprehended Violence Protection Orders can be obtained if necessary.

Care and management of students

- report and document incidents involving physical restraint of students or violence involving students. This provides important information if an allegation is made about the related conduct of a staff member
- actively supervise students when on playground duty
- clearly instruct and carefully supervise students operating equipment

- provide correctional feedback on student work in a constructive way
- when confiscating personal items, such as mobile phones or hats, ask students to hand them to you. Only take items directly from students in circumstances where concern exists for the safety of the student or others, and your own safety is not jeopardised by this action
- when playing physical sport with children, consider the physiques of students, along with the relative ages and stages of development of all participants.

Teacher-student relationships

- participate in social contact with a student only after obtaining informed consent of the student and the parent (and principal where appropriate); such contact includes meetings, sporting events, phone calls or electronic communications, e.g. emails and text messages
- when acting as a student's mentor, develop a relationship with clear professional boundaries that cannot be misinterpreted as a personal, rather than a professional, interest in the student clearly instruct and carefully supervise students operating equipment
- if a student develops a 'crush' on you, inform a supervisor so independent, sensitive advice and support are available
- praise and recognise all students when appropriate, so they all feel treated fairly
- make physical contact with students in a way that makes them comfortable, e.g. shaking hands, a congratulatory pat on the back, or with very young students by gently guiding them or holding their hand for reassurance or encouragement
- when students, particularly very young children, are hurt and seek comfort it is appropriate to provide reassurance by putting an arm around them
- be alert to cues from students about how comfortable they are in your proximity and respect individual needs for personal space. If you make physical contact with students in class demonstrations, such as PE or drama lessons, explain the activity involved and what you will do

- be aware of cultural norms that may influence the interpretation of your behaviour towards students.

Interaction with students with identified needs

- be especially sensitive when interacting with students who may have poor 'boundaries' for appropriate behaviour after being traumatised by physical, emotional or sexual abuse, because they may misinterpret your actions
- Schools for Specific Purposes and those in Juvenile Justice Centres have particular requirements for child protection, due to the needs of students. Therefore, careful training, planning, programming, documenting and reporting will help protect students from neglect or abuse, and staff from complaints or allegations. Awareness by all staff, including non-teaching staff and where appropriate parents or caregivers, of appropriate strategies and their purpose with individual students is desirable and this will usually be gained in the development of individual management programs.

POOR OR UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICE

The bullet points following under each heading are considered poor or unacceptable practice:

School and classroom culture

- excluding students from a lesson or activity, then leaving them unsupervised in corridors, classrooms or storerooms
- leaving a class unattended or dismissing students early from a lesson so that they are unsupervised
- not reporting concerns about risk of harm to a child or misconduct of a staff member towards a student
- attempting to physically prevent a student from entering or leaving a classroom, unless there is a concern for the safety of the student, other students or staff
- closing doors or windows to rooms without checking students are safely out of the way

- pursuing a student who is attempting to run away unless that student is in immediate danger or is likely to harm another person
- shouting angrily at students to intimidate them
- commenting to or about students on the basis of disability, gender, sexuality, cultural or racial stereotypes.

Care and management of students

- public disciplining or humiliating a student as punishment or as an example to other students
- throwing an object such as a duster, chalk, ball or book at a student to get their attention
- threatening students with physical punishment
- corporal punishment, such as hitting, smacking or caning of students
- providing inadequate supervision for students while on duty during excursions
- not appropriately responding to or referring clear requests from students for medical attention or first aid
- arranging activities or meetings alone with a student that are not within school guidelines or that are without the informed approval of a supervisor and, if appropriate, the parent or caregiver
- targeting students unfairly for criticism or prejudging complaints from other staff or students about their behaviour based on past conduct.

Teacher-student relationships

- teasing students or unfairly withholding praise from them
- putting your arms around students while instructing them on the computer
- developing a practice of cheek kissing as a greeting or for congratulating students
- repeatedly and unnecessarily touching students on the back, shoulders, arms or legs

- allowing a student to sit on your lap
- undressing in front of a student, e.g. in PE or activity centre change rooms
- giving gifts or money to students as a reward or incentive for good behaviour or as a gesture of friendship
- conversing about sexual matters unrelated to a syllabus
- telling jokes of a sexual nature
- making sexually suggestive remarks or actions, obscene gestures or showing inappropriate videos
- deliberately exposing a student to the sexual behaviour of others, including access to pornography.

Practices in the following bullet points are prohibited (and may also be criminal acts):

- having sexual relationships with students – it is irrelevant whether the relationship is homosexual or heterosexual, consensual or non-consensual, or condoned by parents or caregivers (the ages of the students or staff members involved are also irrelevant)
- giving students alcohol or other drugs (except prescribed in accordance with Department and school policy), or encouraging or condoning the use of alcohol or other drugs by students
- possessing, downloading or distributing child pornography.

Interaction with students with identified needs

- using unnecessary force to make physical contact with a student as a prompt for a verbal instruction, or to force compliance
- failing to implement strategies negotiated and outlined in individual student management programs
- using physical contact to contain confrontational behaviour of students of all ages (particularly those with identified behaviour or conduct disorders), unless there is a concern for the safety of the student, other students or staff.