

The New School at West Heath

Policy on Privacy and Dignity

Introduction

Reference is made to promoting the key values of Privacy, Dignity, Independence, Choice, Rights and Self-Fulfilment in our school prospectus and other policy documents and guidance notes in our school. Whilst the promotion of Privacy and Dignity is no more or less important than achieving the whole range of values in practice, these are particularly pertinent to the residential situation. It is essential that our students, living together and being cared for by a small staff team have their needs for Privacy and Dignity met for the following reasons:-

- Many of our students join us with an entirely fragile self image. Their previous experience of life and particularly their educational experience has left them with a low sense of self worth, value and confidence. We aim to support our students learn the value of respect for themselves and each other so that they can appreciate their unique individuality, through the way we interact with them. It is particularly important that we meet their need for Privacy and need for being treated with Dignity if they are to start to value themselves. If we cannot show that we value our students in their own right through the way we relate with them, we cannot expect them to value themselves.
- Promoting and respecting each other's need for Privacy and Dignity in the sometimes intense environment of a group living situation will contribute to the maintenance of a harmonious emotional atmosphere.
- Mutually beneficial relationships are founded in a respect for each other's need for Privacy being met and being treated with Dignity. We aim to ensure that our students leave us having learned these essential life skills so that they are equipped in life to be able to make and sustain meaningful relationships in the future

Strategies

1. Whole School

The principles enshrined in this policy will feature in all interactions and relationships between staff and students. Of particular note is the administration of medicines. Medicines will be administered privately, without fuss or embarrassment, sensitive to the individual needs of each student. Students will not be stigmatised for having to take medication. Similarly, personal information regarding individual students will be shared on a need to know basis only. This includes Child Protection information, individual diets and allergies etc. Additionally, personal information regarding staff will not be shared with students. This includes their contact details and personal circumstances.

2. Boarding Students

We aim to ensure the promotion of these two values for our boarding students by: -

- Key Workers having their key work sessions with individual students in private
- Ensuring that student files are maintained in a locked cabinet in a locked room and that the contents remain confidential
- Ensuring a “confidentiality” clause in our staff employment contracts
- Providing students with individual locks and keys to their bedroom doors
- Aiming to ensure that individual students may choose their own study bedroom, where this is possible
- Ensuring that personal information about individual students is shared on a “need to know basis” only
- Administering medication to individual students privately
- Respecting student privacy in their study bedrooms by knocking on their door and waiting to be invited in before entering
- Ensuring the process of students leaving our school campus at the end of the school day in their taxi’s is accomplished discreetly and without fuss
- Consulting with boarding students in the production of this policy

Sometimes it will be necessary for staff to enter the bedrooms of individual students without their permission. Urgent entry can be made in an emergency or for routine building checks intended to safeguard the welfare of our students, their equipment and/or school buildings e.g. closing bedroom windows that have been left open during the week-end. A record will be kept of all such actions.

Otherwise the following responsibilities will apply:

- A student must be consulted about entry to their rooms if they are on site or likely to be on site soon (i.e. within the next two hours)
- Should the student not be on site, entry can be made preferably in the company of another member of staff or, at least through consultation with another member of staff, in order to ensure the propriety of the entry. Additionally, should such entry be made, the student concerned will be informed of the circumstances, the time of entry, the length of entry and whether anything in their room was changed, as soon as possible. Respective staff should also be notified so that future need to enter bedrooms to turn lights, taps etc., off will be reduced.

Privacy & Dignity

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:
Ethics, Appropriate Physical Contact, Dress Code

Appendices:

Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of:
The Senior Leadership Team

Lead responsibility: Vice Principal - Residential

Relevant Legislation: To be detailed in the next release

Annual Policy Review Required: Yes / No

Approved by: S.S. Committee

Date approved: 21/01/04

Ratified by: Trustees

Date ratified: 11/2004

Reviewed – no changes

Date:

Reviewed – with revisions

Date:

Revision No.

1.0