

John Paul College Policy**PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY****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 Teachers Council registration criteria and the New Zealand Teachers Council Code of Ethics for Teachers.

In addition to the above the John Paul College Board of Trustees and the Proprietor of the College the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Hamilton Diocese have a clear expectation that teachers at the school will at all times maintain the highest professional standards and integrity. An important element in professional standards is maintaining professional boundaries between teachers and students.

PURPOSE

1. To ensure that teachers are fully aware of the importance of professional boundaries between themselves and students as part of their professional practice
2. To identify behaviour and practices which could undermine those professional boundaries and lead to a breakdown in the teacher student relationship
3. To identify the adverse consequences including disciplinary which could occur if professional boundaries are not maintained
4. To ensure teachers comply with professional standards and the Code of Ethics published by the Education Council of NZ.

GUIDELINES

1. Staff new to the College will receive advice on professional boundaries as part of the induction process.
2. 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 the students' academic and pastoral progress.
3. There is an important distinction between being 'friendly with students' which is commendable and 'being their friend' which is to be avoided.

4. 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.
5. Counsellors are employed to offer counselling services to students.
6. Each member of staff has a specific role in school e.g. teacher, Dean, Counsellor. It is essential that they work within their own job description and respect the expertise of others.

Unsafe Behaviour /Practices (Keeping Yourself Safe)

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

1. Hugging or touching students. Any conduct should be initiated by the student and be in public.
2. Having existing students on social media such as 'Facebook' for social purposes. If necessary use another 'Facebook' page as professional communication.
3. Texting students with personal comments, particularly in the evenings, weekends or school holidays. Any contact with students through social media is for professional purposes only.
4. If doing an activity with one student (e.g. 'Dancing with the Staff') let other staff know about it.
5. Giving advice to students outside the teacher's area of expertise e.g. depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual health, family relationship issues (they should be referred to the Guidance Department).
6. Making inappropriate comments or engaging in conversation with students on dating, attractiveness, social life etc.
7. Allowing students into classrooms or offices for social reasons.
8. Discussing with students staff members marital or personal problems.
9. Allowing students to drive personal vehicles. If transporting one student in your car it should be considered whether they should travel in the back seat.
10. Socialising with students particularly at pubs, nightclubs and parties.
11. Giving or accepting expensive or intimate gifts/ money to or from students.
12. When needing to see students endeavour to have another person present and be visible – this, however, is dependent on the context.

Consequences of Unsafe Practices

1. Engaging in unsafe practices or behaviour of the type described above can diminish the professional reputation and standing of the teacher.
2. They can lead to complaints from students, parents and colleagues.
3. 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 and up to dismissal and deregistration.

Review Process

This policy shall be reviewed every three years

Ratified by Board



Signed by BOT Chair

27.10.2015

Date

Next Review

Signed for BOT 2018