

Rangiora High School

Board of Trustees



Professional Boundaries Policy

Rationale

Secondary school teaching is a professional occupation. Teachers are bound by professional standards contained in the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement (Supplement 1), the Education Council New Zealand / Matatu Aotearoa Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession. Their actions must always be guided by the principle of what is in the best interests of the students. All staff should also be guided by common sense and that they are the adult in the student/teacher relationship.

Rangiora High School Board of Trustees have a clear expectation that staff 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.

Teachers and Support Staff are 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

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

Guidelines

1. Staff new to Rangiora High School will receive advice on boundaries as part of their induction process.
2. Building positive relationships with students is key to a successful school culture. These relationships should be based on mutual trust, restorative practice where appropriate, respect and focused on the students' academic and pastoral needs.
3. There is an important distinction between being 'friendly with students' which is commendable and 'being their friend' which is to be avoided.
4. Counsellors are employed specifically to offer counselling services to students.
5. Each member of staff has a specific role in a school; e.g., librarian, receptionist, teacher, Dean, Counsellor. It is essential that staff work within their own job description and respect the expertise of others.

6. Any confidential information regarding health/safety of students must proceed to appropriate guidance staff and/or the Principal.

Keeping Staff and Students Safe

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

1. Hugging or touching students without their direct or implied consent. Any contact should, for safety reasons, be initiated by the student and be in public.
2. Communicating with students for *social purposes* via social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Text messaging. It is preferable to use Moodle or other Educational Facebook page for professional communication.
3. Texting/emailing/messaging students with personal comments. This is unwise at any time, particularly in the evenings, weekends or school holidays.
4. Conducting an activity with one student, e.g. tutorials, Parents, whānau, other staff and the student's parents should be made aware of it. Teacher and student should be visible to others.
5. Giving advice to students outside the teacher's area of expertise e.g. depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual health, family relationship issues. These should be referred to the Guidance Department.
6. Making inappropriate comments or engaging in conversation with students on such topics as dating, their attractiveness, social life etc.
7. Allowing students into your classroom or office for social reasons.
8. Taking students off site during school hours for hospitality without the express knowledge of the Principal.
9. Discussing with students your own marital or personal circumstances/problems.
10. Transporting one student in your vehicle should be avoided unless the parent is informed and gives consent.
11. Socialising with students particularly at hotels, bars, nightclubs, parties or allowing them to visit/stay in your home unless in your role as parent.
12. Giving or accepting expensive or intimate gifts from students (see Gifts' Guidelines).
13. Discussing students with others (parents, friends, other students) unless in a professional context and manner.
14. Discussing students at non-school venues, e.g. Supermarkets, sports venues.

Consequences of Unsafe Practices

Engaging in unsafe practices or behaviour of the type described above can:

1. Damage the professional reputation and standing of the teacher, their colleagues and the school.
2. Lead to complaints from students, parents and colleagues.
3. Could lead to disciplinary action.

Related Policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Social Media Procedural Policy

Relevant Documentation

- [Education Council 'Our Code, Our Standards'](#)
- [Netsafe](#)

Date of Review	March 2020
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