

Staff, Volunteers & the Board Code of Conduct Policy

VISION STATEMENT

GERALDTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL WILL PROVIDE OUTSTANDING EDUCATION AND A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY, CULTIVATING PEOPLE OF INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE OF MIND AND A LOVE OF LEARNING.

Introduction	This statement outlines the Geraldton Grammar School policy on the code of conduct of its staff at Geraldton Grammar School.
Scope and application	The policy applies to all employees, volunteers and Board members of Geraldton Grammar School
Related legislation and guidelines	Child protection and mandatory reporting legislation. AISWA guidelines are used as a format for this policy.
Related Policies	Equal Opportunity Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, Child protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy, Professional Conduct Policy and Social Media Policy, Volunteers policy, Behaviour Management policy
Evaluation	Annual

Date	Action (issue, reissue, amendment, replacement of pages, etc)	Initials
2009	Draft	GMY
31/3/10	Revised	SSW,SPN
25/3/13	Crest	SPN
10/03/16	Amended: addition of school values, smoke-free zone update, breaches statement.	NJE
14/02/18	Revised and amended	DLE
17/12/18	Revised and amended	DLE
20/01/19	Revised and amended	DLE
18/02/2019	Amended	MNN
11/03/2019	Revised to include volunteers and Board members	MNN

STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND THE BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

OBJECTIVES

1. This Code of Conduct Policy provides a framework to promote positive work practices and establishes an expectation for personal and professional boundaries concerning appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in relation to staff, students, volunteers, parents and guardians and the Board of Governors. It is not intended to cover issues that may arise but rather provide a framework to address ethical and legal issues that may arise.
2. The Code of Conduct establishes a standard by which all staff, volunteers and the Board:
 - act to protect the safety and welfare of all children at Geraldton Grammar School;
 - conduct themselves towards other staff or colleagues, staff representatives, the student body and their representatives, government authorities and the general community;
 - perform their duties and obligations to Geraldton Grammar School;
 - fulfil the mission and embody the values of Geraldton Grammar School; and
 - practice fairness and equity.
3. The Code of Conduct has been established on the following legal obligations and organisational values:
 - Child protection;
 - respect and responsibility;
 - honesty and integrity;
 - forgiveness and reconciliation;
 - care and compassion;
 - striving for excellence in all that we do; and
 - Anglican traditions.
4. The successful development of an ethical environment relies on individuals being responsible for their professional behaviour, in the signing of an Employment Contract, Volunteer Agreement or acceptance of a position on the Board, all staff accept these conditions as part of their employment/involvement with Geraldton Grammar School.
5. Where there is doubt as to the application of the Code of Conduct, or the appropriate course of action to be adopted, staff affected should discuss the matter with their line-manager, in the first instance, then if the matter is unresolved discuss the matter with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
6. The Code of Conduct applies broadly to all volunteers, visitors and contractors

Staff Code of Conduct

Geraldton Grammar School expects staff volunteers and the Board to act within the law, be diligent, impartial, courteous, conscientious and respectful in the performance of their duties and obligations to Geraldton Grammar School, the students and the community.

1. Child Protection

Geraldton Grammar School is committed to providing a child safe environment which safeguards all students and is committed to promoting practices which provide for the safety, wellbeing and welfare of our students and all young people. Geraldton Grammar School expects all community members, including staff, volunteers, the Board, students, visitors, and contractors to share this commitment.

All staff, volunteers and the Board working at Geraldton Grammar School have a legal responsibility to protect children from any form of child abuse including; physical, sexual, emotional and psychological and neglect and grooming.

Every child has the right to be protected from sexual abuse and grooming. Sexual abuse includes behaviour in circumstances where:

- The child is subject to bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence.
- The child has less power than another person involved in that behaviour.
- There is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.
- The child is groomed in relation to the preparation of engaging in sexual activity.

Grooming behaviour with children may include, but is not limited to:

- Selecting and befriending a child and gaining his or her trust and then exploiting the child's vulnerabilities.
- Testing a child's boundaries by telling inappropriate jokes, roughhousing, backrubs, tickling, or sexual games.
- Moving from non-sexual touching to "accidental" sexual touching. This typically happens during play so the child may not even identify it as purposeful, inappropriate touching. It is often done slowly, so the child becomes gradually desensitised to the touch.
- Manipulating the child to not tell anyone about what is happening. The abuser may use a child's fear, embarrassment, or guilt about what has happened. Sometimes, the abuser uses bribery, threats, or coercion.
- Causing the child to feel responsible for the abuse. Children may not notice or may become confused as the contact becomes increasingly intimate and sexual.

Grooming behaviour with adolescents may include additional strategies, such as:

- Identifying with the adolescent. The abuser may appear to be the only one who understands him/her.
- Displaying common interests in sports, music, movies, video games, television shows, etc.
- Recognising and filling the adolescent's need for affection and attention.
- Giving gifts or special privileges to the adolescent.
- Allowing or encouraging the adolescent to break the rules (e.g., smoking, drinking, using drugs, viewing pornography).
- Communicating with the adolescent outside of the person's role (e.g., teacher, or coach). This could include, for example, texting or emailing the teen without the parents' knowledge.
- In addition to grooming the child, the groomer will use deflection strategies to remain unchallenged. Some of these strategies may include where the perpetrator is:
 - Promoting self and creates a reputation as caring, child-loving, competent, available, trustworthy, truthful;
 - Raising doubts about the motives, mental health, the reliability of the child or anyone else who might approach support services with allegations;
 - Fostering dependency as someone the family can rely on;

- Positively representing the child to others so as to be perceived as someone who would never harm the child.

Any form of sexual abuse must be reported. Mandatory reporting for all teachers in incidences of where they have formed a belief of sexual misconduct is a legislative requirement. Please see the *Child Protection Policy*. Other staff, volunteers and the Board are expected to follow the policy and report to the Principal.

Staff, volunteers and the Board are expected to observe professional boundaries including emotional, power, communication and physical boundaries. The following statements are not an exhaustive list but provide staff with some examples of inappropriate behaviour.

Staff, volunteers and the Board must not:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with students.
- Express personal views that are derogatory towards cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, ethnicity, sexuality or disability.
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student, including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material.
- Engage in any inappropriate or unnecessary physical behaviour that the child is capable of undertaking themselves, e.g. dressing a child, taking a child to the toilet.
- Engage in contact with students through any social media or technology that is not of a work-related matter.

Boundaries are not always clear, and there are grey areas. Two easy questions to ask yourselves would be:

- Would I feel comfortable sharing my actions at a staff meeting?
- Would I modify my behaviour if another staff member was present?

If you are unsure, err on the side of caution and seek clarification from your line manager.

In all situations, the school explicitly forbids child abuse, corporal and degrading punishment.

Corporal punishment is *'any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light; typically involving hitting the child with the hand or with an implement; can also include, for example, forcing the child to stay in an uncomfortable position. It does not include the use of reasonable physical restraint to protect the child or others from harm.*

Degrading punishment is *'any punishment which is incompatible with respect for human dignity, including corporal punishment and non-physical punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child.* Please see Geraldton Grammar School Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedure for a definition of **child abuse**.

Staff must participate in annual professional learning on the recognition of grooming and child abuse and appropriate prevention practices and strategies including mandatory reporting courses.

The steps and procedure for making a report are outlined in the “Child protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy” and are briefly outlined overleaf for all sexual abuse (mandatory reportable) and non-mandatory reportable abuse

Steps for mandatory reporters

- Step 1 – A teacher, in a paid or unpaid capacity, forms a belief based on reasonable grounds that sexual abuse is occurring.
- Step 2 - Makes a report.
- Step 3 - Notifies the Principal of the report.

NB: Sexual abuse that occurred before 1 January 2009 is not considered a mandatory report but must be reported to the Principal.

The steps for non-mandatory

- Step 1 - Forms a belief.
- Step 2 - Notifies the Principal, Head of School or Deputy Principal.
- Step 3 - Makes the report to the Department of Child Protection.
- Step 4 - Principal reports as per Critical Incident Policy.

In cases where a former student (still under the age of 18), or the parent or guardian of a former student, makes an allegation about child sexual abuse at the school occurring before 2009, the Department of Communities – Child Protection Service is to be informed immediately. An allegation involving a former student who is now aged 18 or over is reportable to the Police. In either case, the Principal must submit a critical incident report to the Director General, Department of Education and may also be required to notify the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia.

2. Duty of Care

Staff, volunteers and the Board have a duty of care for all students and staff must take all reasonable steps to protect students from risks of harm that can be reasonably predicted. The duty includes:

- The provision of adequate supervision.
- Ensuring grounds and equipment are safe for student’s use.
- Staff, volunteers and the Board are required to report all objectively observable breaches of this Code of Conduct to the Principal or, where the breach observed was committed by the Principal, to the Chair of the school’s governing body.
- Implementing strategies to prevent bullying from occurring in the school.
- Providing medical assistance (if competent to do so), or seeking assistance from a medically trained person to aid a student who is injured or becomes sick.

3. Natural Justice, Fairness and Equity

Staff who are required to investigate complaints against other staff, volunteers, the Board or students, or issues affecting staff or students, are expected to act consistently, promptly, and fairly. Staff, volunteers and the Board are to model effective leadership and respect in all interactions with students. Staff, volunteers and the Board must not engage in any discrimination, harassment or bullying of colleagues, students or parents. Staff, volunteers and the Board must comply with all school policies in dealing with matters that breach natural justices, fairness and equity at Geraldton Grammar School.

4. Use of School Facilities and Equipment

Staff, volunteers and the Board should take all possible care in the use of school property, goods, services and information and ensure they are used efficiently, carefully and professionally.

Unless permission has been granted by the staff member's line-manager, school resources are not to be used for private purposes.

5. Privacy and Use of Personal and Official Information

Staff, volunteers and the Board have a duty to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and security of school information for which they are responsible, this includes the parents' right to privacy.

6. Records Management

Staff, volunteers or the Board must not remove documents from official files. They are controlled records and must be complete, up-to-date and capable of providing organisational accountability when scrutinised.

Staff, volunteers and Board members must not damage, dispose of, or in any other manner, interfere with school documents or files. The destruction of records may only take place in accordance with a disposal and retention schedule, which has been approved by the Board of Governors.

7. Information Technology

Staff, volunteers and the Board must take all reasonable precautions, including password maintenance and file protection measures to prevent unauthorised access.

Staff, volunteers and the Board have an obligation to maintain the security and confidentiality of the information systems over which they have responsibility or control and that are owned, leased or used under licence or by agreement by Geraldton Grammar School. Staff, volunteers and the Board should ensure that passwords are kept secret, changed regularly and sufficiently complex.

Staff, volunteers and the Board have an obligation to act in a manner that is appropriate with Geraldton Grammar Schools policy on ICT including;

- Using appropriate and professional language in school emails
- Not to use ICT to send messages that are in any manner harassing, discriminatory, defamatory, threatening, abusive or obscene

8. Conflicts of Interest

In many cases, only the individual staff, volunteer or Board member will be aware of the potential for conflict of interest. Therefore, the onus is on that person to notify their line-manager if a potential or actual conflict of interest arises.

Geraldton Grammar School expects staff, volunteers or Board members to:

- a) declare any conflict of interest to their line-manager; and
- b) avoid any detrimental outcome as a result of a conflict of interest.

Employment or professional activities other than those undertaken as part of a staff member's role at Geraldton Grammar School, must not impact on their ability to perform their duties at School.

9. Public Comment and Use of Official Information

Only the Chair of the Board, Principal or individual delegated the authority by the Principal may make an official public statement on behalf of Geraldton Grammar School.

Public comment by school staff, volunteers or Board members made in a private capacity should not imply that the comment is in some way an official comment by Geraldton Grammar School.

All public documents must adhere to the Geraldton Grammar School style guide and must be approved by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Official letterhead may not be used for any non-school related document.

10. Personal Safety

Staff, volunteers and Board members should not accept a student or parental abuse or harassment. If a staff, volunteer or Board member is abused or harassed by a student or a parent, the staff, volunteer or Board member should report the circumstances to their line-manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team.

11. Safety and security

Staff, volunteers and the Board will acknowledge their responsibilities and obligations under Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) regulations and agree to take reasonable and practical precautions to manage hazards and risks to ensure a safe working environment.

Staff volunteers and the Board are required to:

- Uphold WHS responsibilities in line with the requirements of their role at Geraldton Grammar School.
- Perform all duties in accordance with relevant WHS regulations, school policies and procedures.
- Consult with all stakeholders including staff, students, parents and contractors on any WHS matters that may impact them.
- Support colleagues in return to work endeavours.
- Report hazards and take all reasonable and practical steps to protect themselves and others.

12. Personal and Professional Behaviour

Staff, volunteers and the Board should perform the duties associated with their position to the best of their ability diligently, impartially and conscientiously. In the performance of their duties, staff, volunteers and the Board:

- Should strive to keep up-to-date with advances and changes in the knowledge of their discipline and the professional and ethical standards relevant to their areas and expertise.
- Must maintain adequate documents to support decisions made.
- Must treat all persons with courtesy and sensitivity to their rights and provide all necessary and appropriate assistance.
- Must not discuss school business or sensitive staff issues in class.
- Must strive to obtain value for school money spent and avoid waste and extravagance in the use of school resources.
- Must not take or seek to take improper advantage of any official information gained in the course of school employment.
- Abide by the staff dress code.
- Must not harass or discriminate against staff or community members on the basis of ethnicity, gender, culture, race, religion and sexuality.
- Must act responsibly when becoming aware of any unethical behaviour or wrongdoing by any employee. Such information should be forwarded to his/her line-manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Must adhere to all elements of copyright and intellectual property law.

- Should continuously improve work performance. All staff should actively pursue quality improvement.
- Must maintain confidentiality.
- Must not make disparaging remarks about other staff members.
- Must not speak disparagingly of Geraldton Grammar School or its employees to the outside community.
- Must advise the Principal of any impending criminal charges that would result in imprisonment or affect their ability to perform their duties.
- Must disclose to the Principal any action or event that would diminish the reputation or standing of Geraldton Grammar School.

Teaching staff are expected to provide quality teaching appropriate for the students at Geraldton Grammar School, recognising the diversity of learners and making every effort to help all students equally so they have every chance of succeeding. Teaching staff will:

- Program, differentiate, provide feedback and report in line with school policies and expectations
- Strive to improve their teaching practice in line with the performance and development policy of the school
- Reflect and review teaching practice with a view to improving student outcomes
- Reflect and review school policies to keep abreast of changes and in order to comply
- Maintain regular communication with students and their parents/guardians
- Maintain high expectations of students and respect their individual abilities

13. Alcohol or Substance Abuse or Misuse

Geraldton Grammar School expects that staff, volunteers and the Board will carry out their duties safely. They must ensure that the health and safety of other staff, volunteers or Board members and students are not endangered by alcohol or substance abuse or misuse. Geraldton Grammar School expects its staff, volunteers and the Board to perform their job with skill, care and diligence. Staff, volunteers and the Board should not perform any act or omission that is likely to have a detrimental effect on their work performance and that of other staff members and students. Accordingly, staff, volunteers and the Board must not be under the influence of alcohol or other substances while they are at work.

The consumption of alcohol is prohibited at all times during school-related functions where students are present.

The use of illegal drugs is prohibited at all times.

Geraldton Grammar School is a smoke-free zone. Therefore, smoking is not permitted on school property at any time.

14. Breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct

Staff, volunteers and the Board must be aware that Geraldton Grammar School may apply sanctions if this Staff Code of Conduct Policy is breached. Depending on the nature of the breach, various sanctions may be applied:

- Counselling;
- Actions as prescribed under the various award provisions;
- Formal warning;
- Suspension;
- Termination or
- Laying of criminal charges or civil action.

Where the Principal has issued a formal warning to a staff member or terminated the employment of a staff member for a breach of the **Staff Code of Conduct**, suspected to be grooming behaviour, a critical incident notification will be made to the Director General of the Department of Education. In addition, the TRBWA may also be notified.

For more information, please refer to the *Professional Conduct Policy* and *Managing Unsatisfactory Performance Policy*.