

Myra's

POLICY ON INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL CONTACT BETWEEN STUDENTS AND STAFF

This policy articulates what has been for many years expected of staff in their care of students at the school. It is recognised that the role of staff in a boarding school may involve a much closer and caring relationship with students than normally exists in a non-boarding school.

As a general principle, staff should not make physical contact with students, and in particular, no member of staff or those working at the school should have any physical contact with a student either as punishment or for pleasure.

It is recognised however that occasionally some physical contact is appropriate. This includes, for example, hand shaking as greeting or congratulation, and for coaches training students in sport.

There will be times when a member of staff may feel it is appropriate to comfort a student who has come to them in great distress, such as extreme homesickness or on hearing very sad news from home. In such circumstances, a hand lightly placed on the student's back or shoulder may be both kindly and appropriate. It is never appropriate to touch the chest area in girls, or below the chest in either sex.

Staff should be aware that students may occasionally misinterpret what is intended to be a kindly gesture as having some sexual connotation, particularly if the student has experienced sexual abuse in the past. For the protection of both student and member of staff, it is undesirable for a staff member ever to be alone with a student in a closed room unless there is clear vision possible through a window or glass door panel.

Physical contact is often required to assist an injured student or care for a sick student. Those staff providing health care (first aide, house matrons, health care staff) will clearly need to have physical contact with a student at times, but as a guiding principle, all physical contact must be done with the informed consent of the student (unless it is in a life saving situation) and in a manner as if a parent or guardian was present. The need for a chaperone should be recognised for intimate examinations and procedures.

John M Court
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