



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY for English Country Schools

English Country Schools is a British Council Accredited English Language and activity summer schools organisation for 7 – 17 year olds. We seek to maintain a safe a supportive environment for the children attending our courses. All employees and any other adults involved with English Country Schools accept and recognise our responsibilities as follows:

- to safeguard the welfare of children who join the summer schools
- to continually develop awareness of any issues which might harm these children
- to avoid making ourselves vulnerable to suspicion of any form of abuse

We will endeavour to safeguard children as follows:

- by adopting child protection guidelines and accepted procedures
- by adopting a staff code of behaviour
- by providing children with expected codes of behaviour and ensuring they understand what those are, especially bullying.
- by sharing information and acting promptly and professionally to any concerns

English Country Schools commits to reviewing this policy and good practice every 12 months.

1. A 'child' or 'student' in the context of this policy refers to anyone under the age of 18 - children and teenagers - who **will attend, is attending or has attended** English Country Schools.
2. 'Employer' in this context refers to English Country Schools.
3. This policy applies to both real world and online environments.
4. This policy applies to all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
5. This policy has been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the Children Act 1989, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the United Kingdom Government in 1991)

CODE of BEHAVIOUR

- 1) All children have rights. No one can take away a child's right to be safe
- 2) All children have the right to say 'No' if any person tries to do something to them which they feel is wrong.
- 3) All children have the right to be supported against bullies.
- 4) All children must feel they can tell an adult of any incident that frightens or confuses them or makes them unhappy.
- 5) All children must know that if they go to an adult for help, they will be listened to seriously and supported.
- 6) All children have the right to be treated with respect and to be safeguarded from harm.

STAFF GUIDELINES: How staff should react to Child Protection issues.

1) BULLYING

Bullying - the deliberate and repeated act of causing another person to be unhappy - is not tolerated in any form at English Country Schools. The Notes for Students sent to all students and parents before they attend a course state the following:

“NO BULLYING. People who abuse others verbally or physically will be cautioned and if this has no effect will be sent home.”

“BE SOCIABLE. You will be liked by us and other students if you show that you care for other people. Try to keep a positive attitude and be sensitive to others’ cultural differences. Avoid offensive language. If another student has a problem, help rather than criticise.”

Identifying bullying

Bullying can take many different forms; it may be physical, emotional, name-calling, showing a lack of respect for another’s property, excluding somebody from a social group; there are many possibilities. One person ‘having a joke’ is another person suffering bullying. Sometimes it is obvious, sometimes it is done subtly and in such a way that children will be worried about telling staff what is happening. For this reason it is vital that staff are vigilant in noticing changes in behaviour of children, particularly if they become withdrawn.

How to react if you suspect bullying.

1. Investigate all reports, however seemingly trivial.
2. Ensure that all reports of suspected bullying are recorded in the Incidents Book. Ensure also that the follow up and resolution / consequence is recorded.
3. Once it has been established that bullying has taken / is taking place, refer the incident to the Course Manager. With the Course Manager, explain to the person acting unkindly that their actions are unacceptable and tell them the effect it has had on another / others.
4. Ask them to consider an appropriate way of putting things right and, if necessary support them in carrying out an apology.
5. Ensure that any apology / reconciliation is done with staff present so that it can be accurately recorded.
6. Alternatively, bring both parties (bully and bullied) together for a ‘no blame’ meeting. The aim is to clarify the situation through discussion and allow both sides to work out a solution that is satisfactory to them both. This will be recorded and signed by a staff member.
7. Send details to Head Office who will inform parents of both parties what has happened and how it has been resolved.
8. If, after this meeting, the bullying continues then it must be seen as deliberate or that the perpetrator (for example if suffering from fits of anger) is unable to control himself or herself. The Centre Manager will take immediate action to protect the bullied person and will begin procedures to restrict the activities of the bully. Head Office will keep parents of both parties fully informed.
9. Any further incidents of bullying by the same person will result in them being sent home as quickly as possible.

Expulsion

The expulsion of a child or children is a serious matter and can involve high emotions among everyone involved. It should be achieved with the minimum of fuss and explaining the benefit / necessity of the expulsion to all concerned: parents, students, staff and the child or children being expelled. See the separate Expulsion Procedure in the Operations Manual.

2) CHILD ABUSE

Child Abuse is most often used to describe ways in which children are harmed with damage to their physical or mental health. There are 4 broad categories of abuse as follows:

- physical: through hitting, shaking, squeezing etc.
- sexual: through inappropriate physical contact, the taking of indecent images of children, or the encouragement of sexual activity by children for the purpose of adult gratification.
- emotional: through persistent lack of affection, unrealistic adult demands, verbal bullying including cyber-bullying.
- neglect: failing to provide basic needs of food, proper clothing, safe supervision.

Identifying child abuse

It can be difficult to identify child abuse as it has various forms. Below are some typical indicators to watch for:

- unexplained injuries
- a child describing an abusive act that has happened to them
- another child telling you of their concern about a friend / fellow student
- sexually explicit behaviour in games / activities
- serious distrust of adults
- difficulty in making friends / socialising with other children

The last two might appear naturally as summer school is a new and strange environment for the visiting children who typically only stay for 2 or 3 weeks. However, in extreme forms, these might be indicators of a deeper problem.

How to react if you suspect child abuse

- If you notice any physical or behavioural signs, tell the Centre Manager.
- If you suspect an adult is a threat to a child in some way tell the Centre Manager or Course Directors and continue to monitor the situation.
- If a child tells you they are being abused react calmly, as described in the table below. Then contact the Centre Manager.

In any of the above situations, immediately log and record what has happened, what you have seen, suspected or been told. Get your report signed by the Centre Manager.

The Centre Manager will then contact Head Office, who will take appropriate action which may involve external agencies and contacting agents / parents.

If a child discloses abuse:

What to do	What not to do
Stay calm	Don't panic. Don't over-react. It is extremely unlikely that the participant is in immediate danger.
Listen, hear and believe	Don't probe for more information. Questioning the participant may affect how the participant's disclosure is received at a later date.
Give time to the person to say what they want	Don't make assumptions, don't paraphrase and don't offer alternative explanations
Reassure & explain that they have done the right thing in telling. Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed	Don't promise confidentiality to keep secrets or that everything will be OK (it might not)
Act immediately in accordance with the procedure in this policy	Don't try to deal with it yourself
Record in writing as near as verbatim as possible what was said as soon as possible	Don't make negative comments about the alleged abuser
Report to the Centre Manager	Don't 'gossip' with colleagues about what has been said to you
	Don't make a child repeat a story unnecessarily

How to avoid being suspected or accused of child abuse

- Try to avoid being alone with a child. If this is unavoidable, for example if a child wants to talk to you privately, try to find a public place where you can talk without being heard but can still be seen by other people. Alternatively talk in a place where a colleague is discreetly present.
- Do not share changing rooms, washrooms, toilets or bedrooms with children. Always warn children before entering these places. Avoid being in these places with children unless necessary and pay particular attention to avoid being alone with a child in these places.
- Try to recognise if a student is developing a 'crush' on you. Do nothing that might be construed as encouraging this. Inform the Centre Manager. Never flirt with a student or make sexually suggestive or provocative comments, even in fun.
- If you have to touch a child – for example to comfort a crying child, if someone is injured or if you have to separate two fighting children – try to ensure that there are other students and if possible adults present.
- Always log and record any sensitive incidents as soon as possible after they happen and ensure that the log is seen and signed by the Centre Manager.
- Never hit, throttle, push, kick or otherwise act aggressively either physically or verbally towards a child even in pretence. Do not engage in rough physical games, including horseplay.
- When you have to admonish a child, focus on the unacceptable behaviour, not the person. Eg. 'That was a dangerous thing to do because....' rather than, 'You stupid fool you could have...'
- Children can be very demanding. Recognise if you are reaching the limits of your patience and remove yourself safely from the situation, eg. by asking a colleague to cover for you. It is much better to do this than to 'snap' and end up shouting at a child or worse.

3) ELECTRONIC CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

Staff must exercise the same discretion and maintain the same professional distance in any electronic contact with children (anyone under 18) as they would in normal day-to-day life. Electronic contact includes telephone communications (including texting) and on-line environments. In particular:

- Never initiate electronic contact with a child unless for clear pedagogical purposes that have been sanctioned by your employer.
- If a child contacts you electronically, keep your tone friendly, professional and neutral.
- Avoid situations that involve the exchange of personal information, personal photos, virtual gifts or the use of any application that suggests or encourages the sharing of personal feelings.
- If a child seeks to develop an inappropriate personal relationship with you electronically, do nothing to encourage this; inform your employer and send a copy of any relevant communications.
- If a child confides sensitive information to you electronically, such as details of abuse, react as shown in the table above, 'If a child discloses abuse'. Record the details and send a copy of all relevant communications to your employer.
- While a school may have good reasons to create an online social community, social forums such as Facebook present particular risks. Any communication between staff and students should take place in official, closed forums monitored by the employer. Staff should not initiate or accept 'friendship' requests from children, however innocent these requests may seem, as this provides access to photos and other intimate details of each other's personal lives.

4) SAFE COMMUNICATIONS

The content and formality of communication between staff and children will vary according to the situation, both in the real world and on line. For example, a child chatting with a member of staff on the edge of a football field, or in an electronic community forum, might talk about family, holidays, etc. This would be normal and natural. A child might confide in a member of staff about particular personal issues, for example bullying. Or an adolescent might want to talk about sexual orientation. We would want the adult to listen and respond in a professional and helpful manner, noting however the need to record and communicate – in complete confidence - any sensitive incidents to the employer. In general the motivation for social communication should come from the child. The adult should be cautious about sharing personal information and should try to limit communication to active listening* and, if appropriate, elucidating whatever it is the child wishes to communicate. The relationship between adult and child is based on trust vested in us by the child's parents or guardians and subject to moral, legal and contractual obligations. Staff should maintain friendly relationships with children while avoiding exclusivity or over-familiarity. No adult must single out a child for special attention or favour in pursuit of personal gratification. Any attempt or appearance of doing so will lead to disciplinary procedures with potentially serious consequences.

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*To learn more about active listening see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_listening