



Code of Conduct
&
Guidance for a Safe
Working Practice
at
The Oaks Specialist College

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Mission Statement

Our mission is to put young people with learning disabilities at the heart of all that we do. We achieve our success by having a great team of staff who really care about the work that they do with our young people, and who have a wide range of skills and expertise, plus drive and total commitment to our vision.

Our vision is to give all of our young adults opportunities to discover ways of learning that engage and enable them to gain new skills, knowledge and behaviours that develop them, and lead to them each being exceptionally well prepared for their next steps into adulthood and a positive, meaningful and productive long term future.

Core Values

When working with learners and their families at The Oaks, it is vital we embed the following values in our practice:

- ★ Put the wellbeing, health, development, and progress of the learners first.
- ★ Help learners to become confident and successful.
- ★ Promote the independence of learners whilst protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm.
- ★ Protect the rights and promote the interests of learners.
- ★ Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of learners and their families by demonstrating openness, honesty, and integrity.
- ★ Be accountable for the quality of our work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving our knowledge and skills.

1. Duty of Care

All staff at The Oaks who work with, and on behalf of our learners, are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources and safeguard.

The safety of our learners is paramount and our responsibility for safeguarding learners is implemented at the very early stages of our recruitment process.

Anyone who considers applying for a job role at the College has a duty to disclose any information that may affect their suitability to work with vulnerable young people.

All staff have a duty to keep young people safe and to protect them from sexual, physical and emotional harm, always ensuring their safety and well-being. Our learners have a right to be treated with respect and dignity.

The duty of care is exercised through the development of respectful relationships between adults and young people. It is also exercised through the behaviour of the member of staff, which should demonstrate integrity, maturity and good judgement at all times. Always act in the young person's best interests.

The Oaks expects high standards of behaviour from all staff. Staff should understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust that comes within their role.

The Oaks will ensure that Safeguarding training is given to all staff, and that Safeguarding, including Prevent, and Health & Safety policies and procedures are implemented, regularly monitored and reviewed.

Staff have an ongoing duty to disclose any information that may call into question either their suitability to work with vulnerable young people, or the reputation of The Oaks.

The Oaks' Safeguarding Team is:

Ros Leach - Lead DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and Single Central Record

Lynsey Ritchie – Deputy DSL

Gordon Tillman – Safeguarding Quality Assurance

John Spavins, Nikki Twiner and Charlotte Thomas – Safeguarding Administrators

All members of staff must adhere to all policies and procedures put in place by The Oaks at all times.

The Oaks has a duty to provide staff with a safe working environment (*The Health & Safety at Work Act*). The College also has a duty of care for the wellbeing of its employees and to ensure that they are treated fairly and reasonably in all circumstances (*The Human Rights Act*).

2. Power and Positions of Trust

As a result of the knowledge, position and/or authority a member of staff has within their role, all staff working with young people are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over another, i.e. working with young people in a College. It is vital that staff understand the position of trust and power they have over the young people they work with, and the responsibility they have to exercise this appropriately. Staff must never use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce, or undermine young people. Staff must always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. All incidents with this potential are to be reported and recorded.

3. Making a Professional Judgement

There may be times and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or act in the best interests of a young person/s, which hasn't been outlined or given guidance to previously. Behaviour changes and professional judgements are made to safeguard the best interests and welfare of the young person/s. In these circumstances, when making such judgements and/or actions, always consider whether they are warranted, proportionate, safe, and applied appropriately. Always report and discuss the circumstances that prompted the judgement/action with a senior member of staff at the earliest opportunity.

4. Confidentially

Staff will have access to confidential information about learners and in some circumstances they may have access to, or be given, highly sensitive or private information. These details must be

kept confidential at all times and only shared when it is in the interest of the young person to do so. All staff should be clear about what information can be shared and in what circumstances. If a member of staff is unsure or in doubt about sharing the information they hold, or which has been requested of them, they should seek advice from a senior member of staff.

5. Behaviour, Dignity and Respect

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence and trust in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of young people. It is therefore expected that high standards of personal conduct are adopted in and outside of the workplace i.e. in their personal lives. Particular behaviours and actions (i.e. misuse of drugs, alcohol or acts of violence) could compromise or question your ability/suitability to work with young people. Staff should therefore understand and be aware, that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the workplace.

The behaviour/action of a partner or family member could also raise similar concerns and require careful considerations by the College as to whether there may be a potential risk to its learners.

The Oaks maintains a culture which promotes positive relationships. The College works proactively to ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect, fairly and without discrimination.

6. Dress, Appearance and Mobile Phones

A person's dress and appearance are personal choice and self-expression however, all members of staff should wear clothing in the workplace which is appropriate to their role. Clothing worn shouldn't be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative, or considered to be discriminatory or culturally sensitive. Dress and appearance should be consistent with safety, hygiene, and decency.

Staff should not use their mobile phones when working other than in special circumstances, which has been agreed with a senior member of staff, or for work purposes.

7. Communication

Communication between members of staff and learners, in whatever form, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, emails, any form of camera and videos, web cams and websites.

Members of staff should not share any personal information with the learners. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the learner, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Staff should not give personal contact details i.e. home and mobile phone numbers or email, unless the need to do so is agreed with a senior member of staff and parent/carer. Communication, between a member of staff and a learner, such as text, email or through internet based websites, outside of an agreed protocol, should not take place.

8. Social Networking

Social networking is a huge part of our lives today. The Oaks must uphold its reputation and ensure the confidence of its parents/carers, statutory authorities, the different agencies who work with our learners, plus members of the public. Therefore, all members of staff should

remember that any such postings on social networking sites must not compromise the reputation of the College, or lead to anyone questioning the suitability of a member of staff. Information including the use of abusive, obscene and vulgar language, photos about themselves or other members of staff or information concerning The Oaks should not be publicly posted. When using social networking sites, staff should adopt privacy settings that restrict access to their personal information to 'friends' only. Staff have the responsibility to report to the College any postings they encounter which could compromise the safety and wellbeing of the learners, information that is damaging to the College or question the suitability of a member of staff.

9. Administration of Medication & First Aid

Where a young person requires medication, either as outlined in their Health Care Plan or as a one off, this should be administered as agreed ensuring safety and protection. Staff should always make another member of staff aware that they are administering medication to a learner. Members of staff should always make sure medication is in date and labelled to that particular learner. Record any medication administered i.e. date, time and dose, and report any errors made in relation to the administration of medication, as soon as occurred.

Depending upon the age, ability and understanding of the young person, where appropriate, they should be encouraged to self-administer medication or treatment (supervised) i.e. applying ointment, use of an inhaler.

The Oaks should ensure that members of staff have the relevant medication training to administer medication to learners, and that this training is regularly refreshed/updated and monitored.

When administering first aid, staff should always make another member of staff aware. Always consider allergies etc before administering first aid. Report and record any first aid given.

The Oaks should ensure staff are trained to carry out first aid where appropriate and that this training is regularly refreshed/updated and monitored.

10. Care Plans

Each learner has a 'care plan' which is made up of a number of assessments. It is essential to follow each 'care plan' to safeguard the young person and to ensure safer working practice. Staff must make themselves aware of, and follow each learner's care plan, notifying the appropriate member of staff if they notice the young person's care plan needs adjusting to meet their needs sufficiently and safely.

11. Physical Contact

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with a young person with whom they are working. However, it is crucial that in all circumstances members of staff have physical contact in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities.

Many occasions warrant the need for physical contact i.e. sporting activities, medical procedures or assisting with learning in the classroom such as a learner requiring 'hand on hand' support with written work. Whenever physical contact takes place, it should be justified in terms of the learner's needs, consistently applied and agreed and understood by both the learner and member of staff. Always encourage the learners, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently.

Many young people do not feel comfortable with any form of physical contact and so staff should always be aware that different levels of physical contact are different for each learner. Other than

the physical contact circumstances mentioned always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries when working with the learners.

12. Personal Care

When assisting a young person with any form of personal care, the changing of clothes, showering etc, it is important that staff assist and support appropriately to ensure the young person's safety, privacy, dignity, and respect. Members of staff assisting with personal care should avoid any visually intrusive behaviour, and should they enter a room where a young person maybe having personal care, knock first and announce their intention of entering the care suite/toilet. Members of staff should not assist with any personal care which a young person can undertake by themselves.

13. Appropriate Language

Members of staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries when working with young people and this is the same for the language used. Staff should not have any form of communication with the learners which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative i.e. verbal comments, letters, notes email, phone calls or texts. Sexual remarks to, or about a learner, should not be made, and staff should not discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of a learner. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought when working with young people.

14. Behaviour Management

Every young person has a right to be treated with respect and dignity even in those circumstances where they display difficult or challenging behaviour. Staff should not use any form of degrading treatment to chastise a learner. Always try to defuse the situation before it escalates. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards a learner is not acceptable in any situation. Any sanctions or rewards used should be part of a behaviour management policy which is widely publicised and regularly reviewed. Where a learner displays difficult or challenging behaviour, staff must follow The Oaks' Behaviour Policy and use strategies appropriate to the circumstances and situation. The use of physical intervention can only be used as a last resort when other behaviour management strategies have failed.

Where a learner has specific needs in respect of particularly challenging behaviour, a positive handling plan should be put together and agreed by all parties. Only in these circumstances should the Behaviour Policy be deviated from.

15. Physical Intervention

The use of physical intervention should, wherever possible, be avoided. It should only be used to prevent personal injury to themselves, another learner or an adult, or in what would reasonably be regarded as exceptional circumstances. Under no circumstances should physical force or intervention be used as a form of punishment. The use of unwarranted physical force is never acceptable. The minimum force should be used for the shortest period necessary, and the techniques used should be in line with the procedure put in place by The Oaks.

In all cases where physical intervention is employed, the incident and subsequent actions should be recorded and reported as soon as it has occurred.

16. Photography and Filming

Working with young people will inevitably occasionally involve the taking of images and recordings. Any photography or filming should be done with regard and need to safeguard the privacy, dignity and wellbeing of the learners. Consent and agreement from the learner and/or

parent/carer (where appropriate) should always be sought before an image is taken for any purpose. The learner and parent/carer (where appropriate) should be told why the image is being taken and what the image is being used for i.e. College website, publicity purposes, published in the media, etc.

Staff should only use equipment provided and authorised by the College. If for any other reason or circumstance that an image or video has to be taken on personal equipment i.e. mobile phone, then this needs to be approved and authorised by a senior member of staff.

17. Access to Inappropriate Internet Use

Members of staff should ensure that the learners are not exposed to any unsuitable material, inappropriate websites/links, or indecent images on the internet or elsewhere. Staff need to ensure that internet equipment used by the learners have the appropriate settings. All films or material shown, or accessed by the learners, is to be age appropriate or suitable to the learner's understanding.

18. Infatuations

A young person may develop an infatuation with a member of staff who works with them. These situations should be dealt with sensitively and appropriately to maintain dignity and safety of all concerned.

Always acknowledge and maintain professional boundaries when working with the learners. Staff must be aware that their own words and actions can be misinterpreted by young people and so therefore must ensure that their own language and behaviour is appropriate.

As soon as a member of staff becomes aware that a learner is developing an infatuation with themselves, or another member of staff, they should discuss this at the earliest opportunity with a senior member of staff.

19. Trips and 'Out of College' Events/Activities

When staff take learners out of College, they should remain in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour is professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries. Staff accompanying learners on an 'out of College' event/activity, are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the learners and ensuring appropriate risk assessments have been carried out.

20. Transporting Learners

Staff are expected to transport the learners as part of their duties using the transport supplied by The Oaks i.e. minibuses. If it is agreed by the College that staff use their own cars for work purposes, they must have fully comprehensive business insurance cover on their policy. They must also ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

It is a legal requirement that all passengers wear seat belts and wheelchairs are secured properly. It is the responsibility of the member of staff providing transport to ensure that this requirement is met.

There may be occasions where a learner needs transport in an emergency or where not to give a learner a lift puts them at risk. Such circumstances must always be reported and recorded to a senior member of staff.

21. Attendance

Staff absences causing low staffing levels compromise the ability of the College to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of the learners.

To achieve positive outcomes with the learners at The Oaks, it is essential that members of staff attend work, unless it is absolutely necessary to be absent.

If it is necessary to be absent from work, staff must contact the office by 7:30 on the morning of the absence.

22. Whistle Blowing

The Oaks has a Whistle Blowing Policy in place which clearly outlines the procedure for dealing with allegations against any member of staff. It is vital that staff feel able to speak up when they see or feel something is wrong. Staff should know that their concerns will be raised confidentially with no repercussion.

All members of staff should acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring any matter of concern to the attention of a senior member of staff.

23. Expectations

Unless previously arranged, i.e. an allotted LSP working with a specific learner in a particular class, it is the expectation of The Oaks that every LSP gets to work with, and knows the level of support needed, for each and every learner within the College. It is vital that LSPs are flexible and open in their working approach. This in place, means that skills and abilities from LSPs are spread across all learners in all classes.

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Notes:

Received ✓ Name: _____ Date: _____

Job Title: _____ Signed: _____