



# TE AWAMUTU COLLEGE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY

## Rationale

Secondary school teaching is a professional occupation. Teachers are bound by professional standards contained in the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Standards for the Teaching Profession and the Code of Professional Responsibility. Teachers should also be guided by common sense and that they are the adult in the teacher/student relationship.

The Te Awamutu College Board have a clear expectation that teachers 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.

A teacher is 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 and safety of the teacher and student.

## Purpose

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

## Guidelines

- Building positive relationships with students is a key ingredient to successful teaching and learning. This relationship should be based on mutual trust and respect and focused on the students' academic and pastoral needs.
- There is an important distinction between being 'friendly with students' which is commendable and 'being their friend' which is to be avoided.
- Teachers are employed predominantly to deliver the curriculum and assess students. This process should take place in an atmosphere of encouragement, good humour, enthusiasm and positive reflection.
- Counsellors are employed specially to offer counselling services to students.
- PRTs will receive advice on professional boundaries as part of their induction and mentoring programme.
- Each member of staff has a specific role in a school eg teacher, Dean, Counsellor. It is essential that you work within your own Job Description and respect the expertise of others.

### Guidelines for keeping yourself and students safe : Potentially Unsafe Behaviour/Practices

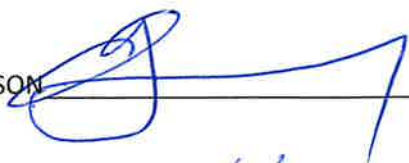
The following behaviours and practices should be avoided since they have the potential to undermine professional boundaries and could give rise to complaints:

- Hugging or touching students without their direct or implied consent.
- Discretion should be used if conducting an activity or meeting with only one student. (This can depend on context and staff member's role).
- Giving advice to students outside the staff member's area of expertise e.g. depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual health, family relationship issues (they should be referred to the Guidance Counsellors or School Nurse).
- Having currently enrolled students as contacts on social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc for social purposes. It is preferable to use another Facebook page for professional communication, if necessary.
- Making inappropriate comments or engaging in conversation or communication (phone calls, texting, emails etc) with students on such topics as dating, their attractiveness, social life etc.
- Discussing with students your own relationship or personal problems
- Discretion should be used when transporting student(s).
- Socialising with students particularly at pubs, nightclubs, or parties. (It is understood that staff who have children or friends with children or who are involved in extra-curricular activities, will at times, be at social occasions where existing students are present).
- Giving or accepting expensive or intimate gifts from students.

### Possible consequences of Unsafe Behaviour/Practices

- Engaging in unsafe practices or behaviour of the type described above can diminish the professional reputation and standing of the teacher.
- They can lead to complaints from students, parents/caregivers and colleagues and wider community members.
- More serious breaches can lead to formal complaints to the Board, Ministry of Education or Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. If the complaints are upheld they could result in disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal and deregistration.

CHAIRPERSON



DATE

2/7/24

PRINCIPAL



DATE

2/7/24