

STAFF AND PUPIL INTERACTIONS

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This Administrative Procedure is established by the Swan Valley School Division (SVSD) to define appropriate and inappropriate interactions between students (pupils) and staff. This Administrative Procedure serves to support the Division's commitment, outlined in AP 210: Safe and Caring Schools, to providing school environments where every student feels safe and respected.

This procedure is formulated in compliance with Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act - Safe Schools, which received Royal Assent on June 3, 2025.

DEFINITIONS

Boundaries: Professional standard and legal responsibilities that guide professional behavior by staff members while and when interacting with or communicating with pupils. Acceptable boundaries are clarified further in the Best Practices for Staff-Pupil Interactions section.

Intention: Any act or outcome undertaken with express advance planning and/or purpose by a staff member.

Parent/Guardian/Responsible Adult: Any person who exercises parental duties and obligations over a pupil by virtue of biological, adoptive, customary, temporary ward or custody, host family arrangement, or through other legally defined responsibility.

Property/Properties: Any physical, electronic, stationary, moveable, or vehicular properties.

Pupil: Any person attending or participating in school instruction or activities inside or outside of Manitoba, subject to exceptions as laid out in the content that follows.

Staff or Staff Member(s): Includes all school or school division employees, including administration, teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as coaches, volunteers, teacher candidates, school board trustee and practica candidates.

Unacceptable Conduct: Includes abusing another person physically, sexually, or psychologically, verbally, in writing, or otherwise, and includes bullying another individual.

BOUNDARIES AND APPROPRIATE CONDUCT

Staff members hold a legal position of trust and power in relation to pupils, which applies always and under all circumstances, whether or not the staff member or pupil is at the school site.

- If this position of trust and power is compromised, it exceeds the boundaries of an appropriate staff-pupil relationship.
- Any such compromise constitutes an abuse and breach of power, a breach of employment duties, and a betrayal of parental and public trust.

- Staff are always encouraged to be diligent in avoiding any conduct that is unprofessional, meaning any act that is not required for learning and instruction, or that could be reasonably perceived as a breach of power or trust.

BEST PRACTICES FOR STAFF-PUPIL INTERACTIONS

The following practices are strongly recommended to ensure acceptable boundaries always remain in place and to minimize potential risk and harm.

DURING SCHOOL HOURS

1. Staff members should not intentionally invite or allow a pupil(s) to visit with them at, meet them at, or conjointly and concurrently make use of a non-school or private property (including a pupil(s)' residence or property), unless:
 - Advance authorization and permission are sought from the staff member's immediate supervisor.
 - The staff member also seeks further written approval from the pupil's parent/guardian/responsible adult in advance, which is then submitted to the supervisor.
2. **Exceptions to Parental/Guardian Approval:** In rare situations, notifying a parent, guardian, or responsible adult may not be appropriate—such as when doing so could pose a risk of harm to the pupil, when the pupil is legally emancipated, or when notification would unduly interfere with the staff member's divisionally mandated duties. In such cases, the supervisor must carefully assess whether granting permission without notification presents any potential risk to the pupil or staff member. Approval should only be granted if the supervisor is reasonably satisfied that all foreseeable risks have been appropriately addressed and mitigated.
3. **Recurring Interactions:** If a staff member intentionally interacts with a pupil(s) more than once per month under the conditions of item 1, a general authorization covering all recurring interactions may be sought from both the immediate supervisor and the parent(s)/guardian(s)/responsible adult(s).

OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS

1. **Private Property:** If a staff member intentionally invites or allows a pupil(s) to visit with them at, meet them at, or use a non-school or private property, they should only do so subject to express, verifiable written consent or permission of the parent/guardian/responsible adult of that/those pupil(s) and their supervisor.
2. **Unintentional Interactions:** Happenstance or unplanned interactions (e.g., acting as a private citizen in the community) remain permissible, though staff members should avoid

interactions that may give rise to public perception of unprofessional conduct.

3. **Family or Kinship:** Interactions arising from established family or kinship relationships between staff and pupils are permissible, but parental/guardian/responsible adult consent is still strongly recommended.
4. **Electronic Communication:** Staff must minimize communications with pupils outside of regular school hours, on weekends and during school breaks. For any electronic communication with a pupil(s) during these times, staff members are strongly recommended to copy the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s)/responsible adult(s) on the communication.

GENERAL PRACTICES (DURING AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS)

Staff should generally avoid the following conduct:

1. **Emotional Attachments:** Only create emotional attachments with pupils within the confines of a professional staff-pupil relationship.
2. **Personal Information Disclosure:** Avoid sharing information about their own personal life or the personal life of others with pupils. Staff must never share information about romantic, sexual, or other private/sensitive information not relevant to the instruction or activity. Voluntary disclosure of personal information regarding sexual orientation or personal information is permissible in the context of school events intended to foster a supportive learning environment.
3. **Gifts:** Avoid giving gifts to an individual pupil that are perceived to be of significant value or of a personal or intimate nature.
4. **Physical Contact:** Avoid engaging in any unnecessary physical contact or interactions with a pupil.
5. **Singling Out:** Avoid "singling out" a particular pupil(s) for inappropriate personal attention and/or friendship beyond the usual staff-pupil relationship. This includes making comments or sharing observations concerning a pupil's appearance, dress, or other characteristics.
6. **Favoritism:** Avoid showing excessive attention and/or favoritism toward a pupil(s).
7. **Secrecy:** Avoid asking or encouraging a pupil(s) to keep specific information or incidents from others.
8. **Inappropriate Comments:** Avoid making or participating in unacceptable or inappropriate comments and/or jokes of a sexual or profane nature or using inappropriate language/profanity in the presence of a pupil(s).
9. **Surrogate Role:** Avoid taking on the role of a surrogate parent/guardian/responsible adult for a pupil (even if requested by child welfare authorities) or criticizing the pupil's

parents/guardians/responsible adults to the pupil.

10. **Electronic Communication Medium:** When required to communicate electronically with pupils, staff must only do so through an approved medium and use only a recognized school source, device, or other approved technology. Such communications must be professional and for school-related reasons only.
11. **Sharing Identifiers:** Avoid sharing passwords, online handles (names, avatars), names, or identifiers for social media, school, or personal email or other means of communication with a pupil(s).
12. **Inappropriate or Sexual Behavior:** Avoid becoming involved with a pupil in such a way that could be viewed as inappropriate or sexual behavior.

THE “RULE OF TWO”

Staff are strongly encouraged and recommended to use the “Rule of Two.” This is practiced by having two adults present during the course of any interaction with a pupil(s), in planning for individualized or small group interactions during and outside of the school day, to protect pupils and themselves in potentially vulnerable situations. If having two adults is not possible, staff should consider alternatives, such as meeting in a public area within the school, having another pupil or staff member present, and/or leaving their classroom or office door open.

ABUSE PREVENTION TRAINING

Staff, coaches, and volunteers are mandated to complete required abuse prevention training programs at minimum once every four years. Staff will complete the Respect in School Program and any staff or volunteers involved in extracurricular activities will complete the Respect in Sport Program. Completion of these programs, and continuing competence in the topics featured in these programs, serves to increase awareness and promote understanding of the many forms of neglect, bullying, harassment and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

DUTY TO REPORT AND ADDRESSING VIOLATIONS

This section outlines the procedures for reporting and addressing violations related to staff-pupil interactions, reinforcing the Division’s responsibilities as detailed in AP 210: Safe and Caring Schools.

REPORTING STAFF BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS

1. **Staff Reporting Obligation:** When any staff member becomes aware of or has reason to believe another staff member is violating acceptable boundaries with a pupil, the staff must report the matter at the earliest possible time to their supervisor, principal and/or superintendent. Not doing so is a violation of legal obligations under The Public Schools Act, The Criminal Code of Canada, and The Child and Family Services Act.

2. **Consultation for Staff:** If a staff member finds themselves in a difficult situation related to boundaries or has questions regarding conduct outlined in this administrative procedure, they are encouraged to consult their supervisor, principal and/or superintendent.
3. **Reporting Pupil Infringement:** If a pupil is, or may reasonably be perceived to be, infringing upon a staff member's professional and/or personal boundaries, attempting to establish an inappropriate relationship, or engaging in compromising conduct, staff members are strongly recommended to consult with their supervisor, principal and/or superintendent.
4. **General Public Reporting:** Staff, pupils, parents/guardians, or visitors who believe a staff member may have engaged in or is engaging in conduct that may violate this policy should notify a supervisor, principal and/or superintendent.