

Woodbridge School INTERVIEWING PUPILS

Policy

Woodbridge School recognises that in any interview the safety and well-being of the pupil or pupils are paramount, and that every possible account must be taken of their rights and needs.

Whenever staff interview pupils regard should be taken of advice given in the *Woodbridge School Child Protection procedures* and in the *Guidance for Safer Working Practice*. This offers guidance on taking measures to protect the pupil, but also on how to avoid complaints against the member(s) of staff undertaking the interview. In addition, staff should endeavour to follow best practice as outlined below, including making contemporaneous written records of the interview which should have explanations for any divergence from these procedures.

Procedures

While at school pupils will be interviewed by staff for a variety of reasons, these interviews being called by either staff or pupils. It would be impractical to outline procedures to cover all possibilities. Instead, the following procedures offer advice based on the overarching principles outlined in the policy statement.

Academic interviews:

Extra teaching; tutorial etc.

Frequently 1-1. A regular part of school life. Staff should ensure that the venue is sufficiently public and the time of day during normal school hours. Leave doors open; ideally have a desk in between pupil(s) and staff; it is sensible to make a record in your planner/diary of the time of the meeting and the people involved.

Pastoral/tutorial interviews:

As above if the discussion is about everyday matters. You are advised to take notes of the meeting as a record. These should be filed with Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey, Housemaster/mistress/Head of Sixth Form as appropriate.

Pastoral/personal interviews:

If you feel that the interview may stray into personal issues, you may be tempted to offer greater privacy (e.g. closed doors). This is not good practice. If the pupil has his/her back to an open door and you are further into the room (ideally the other side of a desk - 'for taking notes') but able to see out to the corridor then experience suggests they will feel sufficiently private, and you are protected. Offering them another person to be with them (or an additional member of staff) is sensible - they

can only say 'no, thank you'. Take notes. Do not offer confidentiality. In almost all cases the notes should subsequently be shared with Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey, HsM/SMT, or in the case of a Child Protection matter as a matter of necessity with the CPC.

Disciplinary interviews:

Interviewing pupils following an incident.

The guiding principle is that we should do our best to ensure that any pupil is interviewed only once about an incident, whether witness or alleged perpetrator. This means that it will need planning.

The interview should be carried out by Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey, HsM/SMT with if possible the pupil's tutor present as the pupil's 'friend'. Pupils should be advised of the tutor's role, and the tutor should resist any urge to 'chip in' with the interview, but concentrate on their role as supporting the well-being of the pupil. If the tutor is not available, and the incident relatively minor then Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey, HsM/SMT might interview alone, or find another member of staff (or support staff) to assist. In some circumstances the pupil might be offered the chance to have a pupil friend in the interview to offer additional moral support.

For serious offences two members of staff should always be in the interview. SMT, Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey /HsM should concentrate on ascertaining the facts and resolving inconsistencies. The decision on any punishment/action will in most cases be taken after the interview in consultation between staff, and the pupil(s) then advised subsequently.

Detailed notes must be taken, either at the time or immediately after, and distributed to HsM/SMT, Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey, and HM pupil file for all but the most trivial matters.

A member of staff not in the pastoral or management leadership team coming across an incident should seek to investigate only as far as finding out the nature of the incident before passing the matter on, and taking any pupils involved, as quickly as possible to a pastoral leader if it is at all serious.

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