



HorseWorld Discovery Code of Conduct

This policy applies to all HorseWorld staff and volunteers regardless of their position, role or responsibility. All staff and volunteers are required to read and comply with this policy. Breach of failure to observe this policy may result in action being taken under HorseWorld's disciplinary procedures.

This policy is not an exhaustive list of acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour. All HorseWorld staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate high standards of personal and professional conduct and consistently always act with honesty and integrity and in the best interest of the children and young people.

Staff and volunteers need to ensure that their behaviour does not inadvertently lay them open to allegations of abuse. Staff and volunteers must maintain professional boundaries and act in a way that would not lead any reasonable person to question their actions or intent. They need to treat all students with respect and try, as far as possible, not to be alone with a child or young person. Where this is not possible, it is good practice to ensure that others are within earshot. Where possible, a gap or barrier should be maintained between staff and child. Any physical contact should be the minimum required for care, instruction or restraint and appropriate to the child's age, stage of development and SEND they may have.

Position of Trust

As a result of their knowledge, position and/or the authority invested in their role, all adults working with children and young people in education settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship between a member of staff/volunteer and a student cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people and all members of staff/volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification. Wherever possible, staff and volunteers should avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others, and report and record any incident with this potential. Staff and volunteers are reminded that it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

Respect

All parties are expected to treat one another with respect. HorseWorld believes that respect is earned through kind and appropriate treatment of one another, and not purely through age or status. All staff and volunteers are expected to seek to behave in a positive manner towards every student, and to put the promotion of every child's wellbeing as a priority in all matters. There are rules and boundaries,



and these need to be enforced in order to maintain good discipline and a strong community, but even when something goes wrong, every child should feel that they are respected, and that they are an important part of that community.

Communication with Students and Acceptable Use of Technologies

All email communication between staff and students must be made from an official HorseWorld email account (any deviation from this in an emergency must at once be reported to the line manager). Staff and volunteers should not give out their personal contact details (such as mobile phone numbers and email addresses). Staff and volunteers should not use personal email accounts or personal mobile phones to make contact with Discovery students, nor should any such contact be accepted.

HorseWorld allows staff and volunteers to bring in personal mobile phones and devices for their own use. Use of personal devices must not interfere with HorseWorld duties; personal mobile telephones and cameras should not be used when members of staff are teaching or involved in an activity with the students and their use should be limited to break times or such other times when staff are not carrying out teaching, supervisory or similar duties.

Staff and volunteers are not permitted to accept personal calls during teaching times and under no circumstances does HorseWorld allow a member of staff to contact a student or parent/carer using their personal device except in an emergency. Telephones are also available in the offices for emergency calls.

Staff and volunteers are not permitted to use a personal mobile to take photographs or videos of or whilst around students. Some HorseWorld provided cameras or devices are available and must only be used with prior approval for a particular work-related purpose. Photos cannot be used or passed on outside HorseWorld without the student's consent or a data sharing agreement in place.

Staff and volunteers are strictly prohibited from bringing any inappropriate or offensive material, such as indecent images and/or pornography, onto HorseWorld's site or at any other time they are on duty. Staff must not use HorseWorld property or HorseWorld's network to access any such material or use their personal devices. If staff discover any material that is potentially illegal or inappropriate, they must immediately contact the Managing Director or Director of Human Resources, in accordance with HorseWorld's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.

Members of HorseWorld staff or volunteer must not visit a Discovery student in their own home, or organise a recreational outing or treat of any kind, at any time (including holidays). The only exceptions to this would be if a member of staff has connections with the student, either because they are friends of their parents or if the student is a friend of the member of staff's own child and in these cases the Head of Discovery and Designated Safeguarding Lead must be made aware of this.

It is not appropriate for HorseWorld staff or volunteers to use social media to communicate with students. Staff and volunteers must never be friends or linked with current



students on any form of social media. If staff / volunteers wish to connect with previous students of Discovery, they should speak to the Head of Discovery and seek their prior approval.

Physical Contact with Pupils

HorseWorld staff and volunteers should not have unnecessary physical contact with students and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by students or onlookers. A member of staff / volunteer can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and should be cautious of any demonstration of affection.

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have minimal physical contact with students, but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their role and the age, maturity and any SEND or vulnerabilities the pupil may have. Staff should, therefore, always use their professional judgement and training regarding this.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff / volunteer believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded as soon as possible, the DSL informed and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the student's file.

Physical Restraint

Any physical restraint is only permissible to prevent a student from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Physical restraint should be a last resort when all efforts to diffuse the situation have failed. Only the force that is needed must be used (i.e. it must be a reasonable use of force).

HorseWorld Discovery discusses and assesses each individual student's risk with the referrer in advance of the student starting on a Discovery course. If the young person has an RA that states 2:1 or more for an offsite visit the referrer will need to have a risk management conversation with the Head of Discovery and/or the Discovery Operations Coordinator.

HorseWorld recognises the additional vulnerability when using reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND or with medical conditions. HorseWorld will consider its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual behaviour plans for more vulnerable children and agreeing them with parents and carers can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force.

All incidents of the use of physical restraint should be recorded in writing and reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head of Discovery who will decide what to do next.

HorseWorld will follow the process set out in the Safeguarding (Child Protection) policy, "Procedure for Managing Allegations Against Staff" where an allegation of using excessive force is made against a staff member or volunteer.

Activities Requiring Physical Contact

Where exercises or procedures need to be demonstrated, extreme caution should be used if the demonstration involves contact with students and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. It is acknowledged that some staff and volunteers, for example, those who teach or assist with practical tasks e.g. riding, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with students in order to support a student so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment or assist them with an exercise. This should always be explained first and done with the student's agreement.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff and volunteers should remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child / young person.

Transporting Students

Discovery staff and volunteers are not permitted to transport students either in their own or HorseWorld vehicles.

Reviewed January 2025

Next review date September 2025

G Hilliard HoD

Telephone or email

01275 893023/discovery@horseworld.org.uk