

Guidelines for Ministry to Minors in Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji

Teachers / Assistants / Helpers **SHOULD ALWAYS:**

- be caring, compassionate and interested in students;
- treat students with equal respect, with no particular student singled out for particular attention whether positive or negative;
- strive to be equally available to all students;
- maintain a professional standard of dress when on school property;
- ensure personal feelings do not affect interactions with students;
- use appropriate and acceptable language and behaviour at all times;
- set and maintain appropriate student/teacher boundaries;
- comply with school policy and procedures with regard to Work Health and Safety, i.e. ensure that your classroom is set up in a safe way;
- comply with school policy and procedures with regards to photographing students, NB: student parental/guardian permission will always be required for photographing students;
- identify any risks that might arise, if you have to take a class in an unfamiliar room e.g. if there are heavy equipment or objects in the room or sinks or taps in the room;
- ensure that students have hats and sunscreen if you are taking a lesson outside;

Ensure when teaching or otherwise responsible for a single student that you:

- have previously discussed arrangements with the school authorities;
- where possible, interact with the student in an area open to observation;
- develop and exercise prudent judgement and sensitivity regarding appropriate physical interaction with students.

Physical contact with students that may be appropriate and acceptable includes:

- comforting an upset student (the level of acceptable contact will vary depending on the age of the child and the source of the distress for the child);
- guiding a student in a non-threatening manner;

- tapping a student on the shoulder to gain his/her attention after verbal requests were unsuccessful;
- protecting a student from imminent danger to themselves or to others;
- assessing a student who is injured or ill; and
- using drama or other activities as part of a lesson which may require the physical handling of a student to demonstrate a particular action or skill.

Teachers / Assistants / Helpers:

- **should never** emotionally harm, mistreat or neglect a child;
- **should never** use sarcastic, derogatory remarks, offensive comments or other inappropriate behaviour;
- **should never** target students for ongoing criticism, belittling or teasing;
- **should never** use excessive or unreasonable demands i.e. hostility, verbal abuse, rejection or scapegoating;
- **should never** make critical personal comments about a student, their family or their lifestyle choices;
- **should never** use sarcasm to humiliate a student;
- **should never** lock a student in a confined space;
- **should never** refuse to allow a child to use a bathroom or to have a drink or food as a means of punishment;
- **should never** make a student experience extremely unpleasant or uncomfortable conditions such as extreme temperatures or standing for an overly long period of time;

- **should never** act in a way that you would reasonably expect would frighten a student;

- **should never** act in a way that you would reasonably expect might make a student feel isolated or alienated; sexually offend against, with, or in the presence of a child, **and so:**
 - **should not** ask questions that probe a student's sexuality or personal relationships;

 - **should not** discuss personal details of your own lifestyle or that of others;

 - **should not** disclose your personal contact details to students;

 - **should not** discuss matters of a sexual nature other than as required by the school as part of the teaching curriculum;

 - **should not** use inappropriate locations or social isolation outside of the school's disciplinary policy as punishment;

 - **should not** drive students in own vehicles unless specific written permission is given in accordance with school policy;

 - **should not** give, encourage or condone the use of alcohol, tobacco or other prohibited substances;

 - **should not** give gifts to a child; for example, giving a birthday gift to a particular student when this is not the practice with other students, or asking the student to keep the gift a secret from others;

 - **should not** show special favours;

 - **should not** allow a student to over-step rules that apply to other students, except where this is approved by the school because of that student's special needs;

- **should not** visit students at their home/s;
- **should not** invite students to visit your home;
- **should not** make telephone calls of a personal nature to students;
- **should not** record personal contact details for the student and their family;
- **should not** send emails of a personal nature to students;
- **should not** have a student attend lessons alone (one-on-one) or otherwise spend time alone with a student outside class hours;
- **should not** send SMS (text) messages to students;

Teachers / Assistants / Helpers:

- **should never** expose a student to material that contains violent or inappropriate sexual messages or themes, or contains adult concepts or themes that are inappropriate for the student; including:
 - obscene language of a sexual nature;
 - suggestive remarks or actions;
 - jokes of a sexual nature;
 - obscene gestures;
 - unwarranted and inappropriate touching;
 - sexual exhibitionism;
 - undressing in front of students;
 - requesting or watching students undress;
 - personal correspondence with students in respect of your sexual feelings for the student;

- deliberate exposure of students to sexual behaviour of others, other than in the case of prescribed curriculum material in which sexual themes are contextual;
 - possession, distribution or display of pornography;
 - electronic transmission of messages or files which are sexually explicit, offensive or contain inappropriate jokes; and
 - sending SMS (text) messages, which are sexually explicit, offensive or contain inappropriate jokes.
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- **should never** physically assault a child:
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- **should never** hold back or restrain a student for any purpose other than where that student is causing harm to themselves or others;
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- **should never** hit or kick a student;
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- **should never** hug or hold a student (unless you are comforting the student or keeping them safe from harm); if a student unexpectedly hugs you out of happiness to see you or upon a farewell, simply turn to one side to ease out of the hug and say, “Let’s do a high five instead” and maintain this as your preferred way of being greeted and farewelling joyfully.
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- **should never** push, pull, shove, grab, pinch or poke a student;
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- **should never** shake or throw a student;
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- **should never** intimidate a student with words or acts;
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- **should never** use an object, such as a ruler, book, duster, chalk or whiteboard marker to gain a child’s attention in a hostile or an inappropriate physical manner.