

CASTLE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

Student Care and Pastoral Support Policy

Policy owner: School Management

Applies to: All students, including students under 18, and staff involved in student support

1. Policy Statement

Castle School of English is committed to providing a supportive, welcoming and caring environment in which students feel safe, valued and able to make the most of their time at the school.

We recognise that students studying in a new country may experience challenges beyond the classroom. These may include homesickness, cultural adjustment, language barriers, accommodation concerns, difficulties settling into a new environment, social isolation or concerns about their general wellbeing.

Our student care approach is designed to ensure that students know where to go for help and that appropriate support is available when concerns arise.

Castle School of English aims to:

- provide a welcoming and supportive environment;
- help students settle into school and life in Brighton;
- ensure students know how to access support;
- respond appropriately to welfare and pastoral concerns;
- identify concerns at an early stage wherever possible;
- provide appropriate practical and emotional support within the school's role;
- refer students to appropriate external services where necessary;
- provide additional support and oversight for students under 18;
- maintain appropriate communication with students, parents, guardians and group leaders where applicable; and
- ensure that student care is delivered fairly, respectfully and without discrimination.

Student care is a shared responsibility. All members of staff contribute to creating an environment in which students feel comfortable asking for help.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled at Castle School of English, including:

- adult students;
- students under 18;
- individual students;
- students travelling as part of groups;
- students staying in school-arranged accommodation; and
- students attending school-organised activities and excursions.

It applies to student care provided:

- on school premises;
 - during school-organised activities;
 - during excursions;
 - in relation to school-arranged accommodation; and
 - through appropriate school communication channels.
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3. Principles of Student Care

Castle School of English's pastoral approach is based on the following principles:

Respect

Every student should be treated with dignity, respect and consideration.

Accessibility

Students should be able to identify who they can speak to and how to access support.

Early Support

Where possible, concerns should be identified and addressed before they become more serious.

Individual Support

The school recognises that students have different backgrounds, circumstances and support needs.

Confidentiality

Student information will be handled sensitively and shared appropriately.

Safeguarding

Any concern involving a student's safety or welfare will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Independence and Empowerment

Students should be encouraged to develop confidence, independence and the skills necessary to manage their time in the UK.

4. Student Orientation

All students will receive appropriate information when they join the school.

Orientation should provide students with information about:

- the school and its facilities;
- their course and timetable;
- school rules and expectations;
- attendance requirements;
- health and safety;
- first-aid arrangements;
- emergency procedures;
- how to contact the school;
- how to raise a concern or complaint;
- activities and social opportunities;
- accommodation arrangements where applicable;
- travelling safely in Brighton and the local area; and
- sources of support.

Students should be encouraged to ask questions and raise concerns at any time.

Students under 18 will receive additional information appropriate to their age and circumstances.

5. Access to Pastoral Support

Students may approach any member of staff they feel comfortable speaking to.

Where appropriate, staff will refer the student to the member of staff responsible for student care or to School Management.

Students may seek support for matters including:

- homesickness;
- difficulties settling into the school;
- accommodation concerns;
- problems with other students;
- loneliness or social difficulties;
- cultural adjustment;
- difficulties communicating in English;
- concerns about activities or excursions;
- general wellbeing;
- practical problems;
- concerns about attendance or studying;
- concerns about safety; or
- any other matter affecting their ability to participate successfully in their course.

Students do not need to wait until a problem becomes serious before asking for help.

6. Pastoral Support Team

Student care is coordinated by School Management and relevant administrative and academic staff.

The school will ensure that students know which staff members they can approach for support.

Depending on the nature of the concern, support may be provided by:

- administrative staff;
- teachers;
- academic management;
- student services;
- School Management; or
- the designated safeguarding lead where safeguarding concerns arise.

Staff will work together where appropriate to ensure that students receive a coordinated response.

7. Identifying Students Who May Need Support

Staff should remain alert to signs that a student may be experiencing difficulties.

Possible indicators may include:

- significant changes in attendance;
- repeated lateness;
- withdrawal from other students;
- noticeable changes in behaviour;
- appearing unusually distressed or upset;
- repeated accommodation complaints;
- difficulty settling into school;
- persistent tiredness or lack of engagement;
- concerns raised by classmates, teachers or group leaders; or
- a student directly expressing that they need help.

These indicators do not necessarily mean that a student has a welfare problem. Staff should avoid making assumptions and, where appropriate, speak to the student sensitively.

Where concerns are identified, the school will consider what support or further action is appropriate.

8. Homesickness and Cultural Adjustment

Castle School of English recognises that studying abroad can be challenging, particularly for students who are living away from home for the first time.

Staff may support students experiencing homesickness or cultural adjustment by:

- listening to their concerns;
- helping them understand local customs and routines;
- encouraging participation in appropriate social activities;
- helping them connect with other students;
- providing practical information about Brighton and the local area;
- encouraging communication with family where appropriate; and
- monitoring whether further support may be required.

Students will not be pressured to participate in social activities, but the school will encourage opportunities for positive social interaction.

9. Accommodation and Homestay Support

Where accommodation is arranged by Castle School of English, the school provides appropriate support for students experiencing accommodation-related concerns.

Students are encouraged to report concerns promptly rather than allowing problems to develop.

Concerns may include:

- difficulties communicating with the host family;
- problems with meals or household arrangements;
- unsuitable living conditions;
- conflict within the household;
- concerns about safety;
- difficulty adapting to the household;
- cultural misunderstandings; or
- other issues affecting the student's welfare.

The school will communicate with the student and, where appropriate, the homestay provider to understand the issue and seek a suitable resolution.

Where a concern raises a safeguarding or serious welfare issue, the school's Safeguarding Policy and relevant procedures will apply.

10. Student Relationships and Social Integration

The school recognises that positive relationships with other students contribute to student wellbeing.

Castle School of English provides opportunities for students to meet and interact with other members of the school community through:

- classroom activities;
- school activities;
- excursions;
- social opportunities; and
- informal interaction within the school.

Students are encouraged to treat one another respectfully.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated and will be addressed in accordance with the school's relevant policies and procedures.

11. Student Wellbeing

Castle School of English recognises that student wellbeing can affect learning and participation.

Staff should respond sensitively when a student indicates that they are struggling.

The school can provide appropriate initial support and practical guidance but recognises that it is not a medical or specialist mental health service.

Where a student appears to require specialist assistance, the school may:

- recommend an appropriate external service;
- provide information about relevant local services;
- encourage the student to contact their GP or other healthcare provider;
- contact emergency services where there is an immediate risk to health or safety; or
- follow safeguarding procedures where appropriate.

Staff should not attempt to provide counselling or medical treatment beyond their training and role.

12. Medical and Health Concerns

Students are encouraged to inform the school of relevant health or welfare needs where these may affect their safety or participation.

Where appropriate, the school may assist students with practical information about accessing healthcare in the UK.

The school will maintain appropriate links between student care, first aid and safeguarding.

Medical information will be treated confidentially and shared only where there is a legitimate need to do so.

13. Students Under 18

Castle School of English recognises that students under 18 require additional care, supervision and welfare support.

Student care for under-18s will operate alongside the school's Safeguarding Policy and relevant procedures.

Additional measures may include:

- appropriate supervision;
- regular welfare monitoring;
- clear emergency contact arrangements;
- appropriate accommodation arrangements;
- communication with parents, guardians or group leaders where applicable;
- additional guidance regarding safety and travel;
- monitoring attendance and participation;
- appropriate support during activities and excursions; and
- prompt escalation of safeguarding concerns.

Staff must report any safeguarding concern in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Students under 18 should be given clear and age-appropriate information about who they can approach if they are worried or need help.

14. Attendance and Student Welfare

Attendance may provide an important indication of student wellbeing.

The school monitors attendance in accordance with its attendance procedures.

Where a student demonstrates unexplained or concerning changes in attendance, the school may seek to establish whether there is an underlying welfare, health, accommodation or other issue.

The purpose of such contact is supportive and preventative.

Where appropriate, concerns may be referred to Academic Management or School Management.

For students under 18, attendance concerns will also be considered in accordance with safeguarding and welfare procedures.

15. Communication with Parents, Guardians and Group Leaders

Where appropriate and with regard to confidentiality and data protection requirements, the school may communicate with:

- parents;
- guardians;
- group leaders;
- agents; or
- other authorised representatives.

For students under 18, the school will follow its agreed arrangements regarding communication with parents or guardians.

The school will consider the student's privacy and confidentiality when deciding what information can appropriately be shared.

Where there is a safeguarding or serious welfare concern, information may be shared where necessary to protect the student.

16. Inclusion and Individual Needs

Student care will be delivered in accordance with the school's Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

The school recognises that students may have different:

- cultural backgrounds;
- languages;
- beliefs;
- family circumstances;
- accessibility requirements;
- educational backgrounds;
- communication needs; and
- personal circumstances.

The school will seek to identify and reduce unnecessary barriers to participation and will consider reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

17. Confidentiality

Students should be able to speak to staff with confidence that their concerns will be treated sensitively.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where sharing information is necessary to:

- protect the student or another person;
- respond to a safeguarding concern;
- address a serious health or safety risk;
- comply with a legal requirement; or
- enable appropriate professional support.

Where information needs to be shared, the school will share only information that is appropriate and necessary.

18. Complaints and Concerns

Students have the right to raise concerns about their experience at Castle School of English.

Students will be informed about how to make a complaint and who they can approach.

Where a concern can be resolved informally, staff may seek to resolve it promptly.

More serious or formal complaints will be managed in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

Students will not be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern or complaint.

19. Emergency and Serious Welfare Concerns

Where a student presents an immediate risk to themselves or another person, or where there is an immediate serious threat to their health or safety, staff must seek appropriate emergency assistance.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- contacting emergency services;
- contacting a parent or guardian where appropriate;
- contacting the designated safeguarding lead;
- informing School Management; and
- following the school's emergency and safeguarding procedures.

Staff should not attempt to manage a serious emergency beyond the limits of their training and role.

20. Staff Responsibilities

School Management

School Management is responsible for:

- ensuring appropriate pastoral arrangements are in place;
- ensuring students know how to access support;
- monitoring significant welfare concerns;
- ensuring appropriate referrals are made;
- ensuring staff understand their student care responsibilities; and
- reviewing student care provision.

Academic Staff

Teachers are often the first people to notice changes in a student's behaviour or engagement.

Teachers should:

- create a welcoming classroom environment;
- listen to students appropriately;
- identify concerns;
- report significant welfare concerns;
- refer students to appropriate support; and
- follow safeguarding procedures where necessary.

Administrative and Student Services Staff

Administrative staff should:

- provide practical assistance where appropriate;
- help students access relevant school services;
- record and communicate welfare concerns appropriately;
- support accommodation-related issues;
- assist with communication with authorised contacts; and
- refer serious or complex concerns to School Management.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- treating students with dignity and respect;
 - maintaining appropriate professional boundaries;
 - responding sensitively to concerns;
 - reporting safeguarding concerns;
 - maintaining confidentiality appropriately; and
 - seeking assistance where a concern is beyond their role or competence.
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21. Professional Boundaries

Staff providing pastoral support must maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

Staff should not:

- provide specialist counselling or medical advice unless appropriately qualified;
- make promises of absolute confidentiality;
- become inappropriately involved in a student's personal life;
- engage in inappropriate personal relationships with students; or
- attempt to manage serious safeguarding or welfare concerns without following school procedures.

Where a concern is beyond a staff member's role or competence, it should be referred to the appropriate person.

22. Records

Where appropriate, significant pastoral concerns and actions taken will be recorded.

Records may include:

- date of concern;
- nature of the concern;
- person raising the concern;
- action taken;
- referrals made;
- follow-up required; and
- outcome where appropriate.

Records will be kept securely and handled in accordance with the school's data protection requirements.

Routine conversations and minor matters do not necessarily need to be formally recorded unless there is a reason to do so.

23. Monitoring Student Care

Castle School of English will monitor the effectiveness of its student care arrangements through:

- student feedback;
- staff feedback;
- welfare concerns;
- complaints;
- accommodation feedback;
- attendance information;
- safeguarding referrals;
- student satisfaction information; and
- other relevant information.

The school will consider whether patterns or recurring concerns indicate that changes to student support are required.

24. Staff Training and Awareness

Staff will receive appropriate information about their responsibilities for student care.

Relevant staff will be made aware of:

- pastoral support procedures;
- safeguarding responsibilities;
- how to recognise potential welfare concerns;
- how to respond appropriately;
- confidentiality and data protection;
- professional boundaries; and
- referral procedures.

Staff should know who to contact when a student requires additional support.

25. Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where:

- legislation or relevant guidance changes;
- school provision changes;
- significant welfare concerns arise;
- safeguarding procedures change;
- feedback identifies a need for improvement; or
- British Council Accreditation UK requirements change.

The school will use student feedback, staff feedback and relevant records to identify opportunities to improve student care.

26. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy;
- First Aid Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Student Code of Conduct;
- Attendance Policy;
- Accommodation/Homestay procedures;
- Emergency Procedures; and
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

Where a student care concern raises a safeguarding issue, the Safeguarding Policy and procedures will take precedence.

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