

Fisher Youth Theatre Group

Student Behaviour Policy

AIMS

1. *To achieve a whole group approach to behaviour.*
2. *To clarify our expectations concerning the behaviour of our students in their role as good citizens within our community*
3. *To enable us to manage student behaviour effectively, reducing poor behaviour and creating an orderly atmosphere in which effective dramatic activities can take place.*

It is important to understand that the jurisdiction of the Fisher Youth Theatre Group extends to all activities that take place during the year and that form part of our agreed program. These may be based at a particular site where we are working or when we are out and about working within the community. We are mindful that we, as a group of staff members and supervisors, are in loco parentis and we expect a high standard of behaviour and respect. This standard is the level that any reasonable parent would expect. At all times students will be expected to honour and support the group's good name within the community.

Our aims, described in our constitution, emphasise a desire for our students to be secure and happy at our group's activities. We want them to have a pride in the group and in their own achievements. We want them to learn respect for each other, for staff and for members of the local community. We recognise the importance of strong links with parents if these aims are to be achieved. These aims form the basis of this behaviour policy. Staff, students and parents will be reminded about the policy at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) held every year in September.

GUIDELINES

Students are expected to uphold a high standard of behaviour at all times. This may be in workshops, behind stage or when waiting for activities to begin. Good behaviour means a display of mutual respect and concern for the interests of the group members and the stated aims of the group. Below is a broad guideline of expectations on our students. It is not comprehensive or complete but merely acts as a guide to parents and students.

1. **Staff members are to be treated with respect at all times.**
2. **Requests for action by a staff member are to be obeyed at all times.**
3. **Equipment and resources are to be returned in a reasonable condition.**
4. **All damages will be charged at market rates.**
5. **Each student has a duty to care for the environment in appropriate ways.**
6. **Litter must be disposed of safely at all times.**
7. **Property that we are using must be respected and cared for.**
8. **Noise from chatter to fellow members can be very distracting and unnecessary. As a group we would wish to maintain, at all times, appropriate levels of noise determined by the dramatic intentions and needs. This applies particularly to rehearsals for plays and performances.**

Rewards

The Fisher Youth Theatre Group aims to secure the highest possible educational and social outcomes for all its students. To support our high expectations of students and the development of a culture of achievement rewards are used.

Children may be rewarded by:

1. A simple 'well done' from the staff member
2. Public acclaim in our rehearsals or workshops
3. Displays and performances of work
4. Prizes at our annual summer performances.
5. Accredited Certificates recognising an achievement or contribution

Exclusion

The exclusion of a child from this Group will only occur in response to a serious breach of our Behaviour Policy or the criminal law.

Reasonable steps will be taken to avoid exclusion such as interviewing the child and parents.

Preliminary factors to be considered before exclusion will be: age and health of the child; previous record; domestic situation; parental, peer or other pressures; severity or frequency of the behaviour and the likelihood of recurrence; whether the behaviour occurred on group premises; the extent of the violation of the group Behaviour Policy, and whether the behaviour was committed alone or as part of a group.

However, the Chair of the group has a duty to maintain discipline and good conduct to secure an orderly drama learning environment, not least in the interests of other group members. Sometimes there will be occasions when there is no option but to exclude.

Only the Chair has the power to exclude a child supported by a vote of the committee at the next available meeting. Written confirmation of the exclusion with the reason will be sent to parents/guardian of the student member and the student member themselves.

Procedures will be applied objectively across different ethnic and cultural groups.

The Use of Force to Control or Restrain Group Members

Whilst corporal punishment is outlawed in all state groups, Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 does enable “staff members, and other staff who have lawful control or charge of students, to use reasonable force to prevent students committing a crime; causing injury or damage; or causing disruption” (DFEE Circular 10/98).

The application of this legislation is clarified in DFEE Circular 10/98 which states that staff members have a legal right to control or restrain students where:

- ? action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury to themselves or others;
- ? there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property;
- ? a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

The legislation will apply to all group employees who will at all times be expected to comply both with the law and the guidance referred to above. This will ensure that:

- ? physical intervention is used only when necessary;
- ? any force used is “reasonable” (see below);
- ? all incidents in which force is used will be recorded
- ? parents and the Headstaff member will always be informed.

The Fisher Youth Theatre Group will adopt these policy guidelines when working with students.

“Reasonable” force could be interpreted as meaning that it must be proportionate to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent and that the force is the minimum needed to achieve the desired result. Additionally force is only reasonable if the circumstances of any particular incident warrant the use of physical force.

Further details including examples of situations in which force could be reasonably used are provided in the DFEE Circular; these can be summarised as follows:

Application of force allowed where staff may need to:

- ? **physically interpose themselves between students**
- ? **block a pupil’s path**
- ? **hold (but never round the neck or collar)**
- ? **push**
- ? **pull**
- ? **lead a pupil by the hand or arm**
- ? **shepherd a pupil away by placing your hand in the centre of the back**
- ? **in extreme cases (such as self-defence) more**

restrictive holds

but staff should not act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury such as:

- ? **hold round the neck**
- ? **restrict a pupil's ability to breathe**
- ? **slap**
- ? **punch**
- ? **kick**
- ? **twist or force limbs against a joint**
- ? **hold or pull by hair or ear**
- ? **hold face down on the ground**

nor should staff touch students in a way that might be considered indecent.

Fisher Youth Theatre Group Staff will receive appropriate training in the use of reasonable force from time to time and will receive more detailed guidance. It should be noted, however, that they couldn't be required to use force.

Bullying

Bullying is any planned action that causes acute or prolonged distress to any other person. It involves a persistent, wilful and conscious desire to hurt someone, either physically or emotionally, or to influence that person to act against his/her will.

This may include:

- ? Verbal threats
- ? Humiliation and/or taunting e.g. appearance/possessions
- ? Racism
- ? Manipulation of groups of children to isolate individuals
- ? Repeated personal comments
- ? Emotional blackmail
- ? Blackmail demanding money/goods
- ? Repeated digs, pushing etc.
- ? Repeated interference with personal property
- ? Physical violence

We can create an environment where bullying is less likely, by ensuring that;

- ? We have a clear discipline/behaviour policy which is known and adhered to by staff and children and communicated to parents.
- ? Staff are alert to possible incidents.
- ? Staff are visible in group activities and children know that they will respond and listen.
- ? Children know that they have a responsibility to inform adults of any bullying incidents.
- ? Incidents are logged for future reference.
- ? Children know that they must take responsibility for their own actions.

Dealing with Bullying:

- a) Dealing adequately with bullying is often a time-consuming process. This has to be accepted. 'Thirty second solutions' rarely work.
- b) Bullying will always be taken seriously and never be ignored. The response will vary enormously. It may be more or less, active or passive.
- c) A note of any incidents and action taken will be kept on file.
- d) The Victim
 - i) Victims are often almost as fearful of the consequences of the staff member getting involved as they are of the original incident. The victim is entitled to a sensitive response. The staff member should usually assure the victim that no action will be taken against the bully unless it has previously been discussed with the victim. The

victim's thoughts about how the matter should be dealt with should be taken seriously. If possible, action should be based upon a consensus between the staff member and the victim (and parents if appropriate).

- ii) The staff members involvement may be a short-term one. However, it has to be accepted that a long-term commitment may be necessary.
 - iii) It may be that the victim should be offered the choice of which staff member deals with the matter, especially if a long-term response seems likely.
 - iv) Possible strategies for helping the victim may include:
 - providing protection or sanctuary
 - changing groups
 - counselling
 - involvement in mutual interest groups
 - observation – 'keeping an eye on them'
 - v) Even after the staff member has stopped being involved, an occasional inquiry about whether things are well with the victim is reassuring.
- e) The Bully.
- i) There is a natural inclination to punish the bully. This may be counter-productive, or pointless. The over-riding aim is to stop the bullying recurring. If a victim is seen to need heavy-handed assistance from a staff member it may more clearly mark him/her out for further bullying in the future. The best response from the staff member is the one that is most effective. This may well be a quiet 'word in your ear'.
 - ii) Possible strategies for dealing with the bully might include:
 - warnings (of varying degrees of forcefulness)
 - punishment
 - removal from potential bullying situations
 - changing groups
 - counselling
 - parental involvement

Monitoring and Evaluation of this Policy

The Group Committee will discuss the success of implementation regularly and amendments made as appropriate. Parents and members will be informed of all changes before they come into force. This document will serve as an appendix to the groups constitution and a copy of the policy will be given to each student when they join the group.

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