The School is committed to the achievement of the highest standards of education in which the security, protection and comfort of students retains the highest priority. The following guidelines are issued for all staff, responsible in any way for the conduct of educational activities at Blue Mountains Grammar School.

Where these guidelines permit unambiguous expression of practices and standards required, these guidelines are to be adopted as mandatory policy. Where such clarity is not possible, the guidelines should be used as a basis for appropriate professional judgement and discretion. The character of such judgement or discretion should be prudent rather than liberal.

These guidelines remain subject to all current Child Protection Legislation.

Staff are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read, understood and agree to abide by these guidelines.

1. **General Guidelines**

   1.1 All staff must complete a Prohibited Employment Declaration form and must undergo employment screening procedures, before commencement of their employment with the School.

   1.2 All staff acknowledge their legal obligation to children placed under their care, ensuring that they act at all times in the best interests of children. The issues of safety and security extend beyond the normal considerations of child protection and include specifically the provision of competent supervision and management.

   1.3 Any member of staff who has sexual relations with a student is guilty of gross misconduct and will be dismissed summarily. In addition, the School will advise all relevant external agencies of the matter.

   1.4 In the case of activities involving overnight accommodation of girls and boys, both genders should be represented where possible in the group of supervising staff. Where it is a single sex student group, at least one member of the group of supervising staff should be of the same gender as the students. Where it is impractical to have supervising staff of both genders, parents are to be informed in advance and given the opportunity to withdraw students from the activity if they are uncomfortable with proposed staffing arrangements.

   1.5 The duty of care requires adequate supervision of students. This includes supervision while waiting for parents to collect their children after the completion of an excursion or irregular activity.
Excursion information in regard to highway collection points and return drop off points must be communicated by a written permission form to students/parents prior to the date of the excursion. All details of collection and drop off must be confirmed in this permission form.

A School mobile phone must be taken on all excursions. Accompanying staff must always have student contact numbers with them when on excursion. If after dark, staff should contact parents when approaching the agreed drop off point to confirm collection arrangements.

Junior School students should always be collected at non-School drop off points by the responsible parent/carer as designated on the excursion permission slip. If the student is collected by any person not nominated in the original permission slip, the supervising teacher must make a considered judgement whether this variation of arrangements is reasonable and safe. If there are any concerns in regards to this situation, a confirmation of these changed arrangements must be made (by phone), or the student returned to School with the teacher and excursion group. Junior School students are never to be dropped off and left unsupervised.

Similarly, Secondary School students should be dropped off only when they are discharged into the care of a parent/carer as arranged through permission documentation or when the student has been given express written permission to proceed directly home by foot, bicycle etc. If there are any concerns with these arrangements the student returns with the excursion group to school.

Students being collected from school excursions that have returned outside of normal school hours must be supervised by a member of staff until collection has occurred. Reasonable judgement must be exercised if students are collected by a non-parent/carer and contact made with the home if these arrangements are believed to be unsatisfactory. In dire emergencies, the Police must be contacted and informed of the child’s whereabouts.

1.6 Parents and caregivers must be informed fully, (preferably in writing), when students leave the School grounds for a school related activity. Details advised should include times, venues, transport, pick up and collecting, and supervision arrangements. An exception to this expectation will occur from time to time with Wilderness Education/outdoor pursuits where decisions may be made according to the weather and there is insufficient time to advise parents formally.

1.7 Adequate and competent supervision requires active coverage of relevant areas. In the case of sporting activities, this includes playing fields, buses, change rooms, storerooms, etc. Staff responsible for the supervision of changing rooms should warn students that they are about to enter the room. Supervision should be discreet, i.e., it is not necessary to stand and watch students change or shower. Only adults of the same gender as students using the change room should normally undertake the supervision of change rooms. In an emergency, where the safety and security of a student is at risk, exceptions will be made to this rule but appropriate warnings should be given before entering a change room.

1.8 Great care should be taken when physical contact is unavoidable as a necessary part of staff exercising their duty of care. All such contact is subject to the Touching Guidelines (see Section 2).

1.9 When staff wish to conduct a private conversation with a student, they should consider the time and venue carefully to avoid placing themselves or the student
in a vulnerable situation. If such an interaction occurs in a classroom, it should be in public view. It is preferable to leave the door open. The Staff member should not locate themselves between the student and the door. If the private conversation occurs in a staff office and it is not appropriate to have the door open, there should be another person within earshot.

It is recognised that the roles of the Counsellor, the Chaplain and the Chaplain Emeritus are exceptional.

1.10 Staff should avoid situations wherever possible where they are alone, in an enclosed space with individual students, such as staff rooms, storerooms, maintenance sheds, change rooms and vehicles. Where adults may be left with the responsibility of a single student, they should ensure that this is in an open space in full view of others. An exception to this general guideline is when staff may need to clean an Infants child after a toileting accident. In such circumstances, privacy takes priority to avoid embarrassment of the child.

1.11 Staff may, as part of their pastoral care role, engage in intensive discussion with students. This is appropriate. However, staff must be wary of making personal comments about a student or asking questions that probe a student’s sexuality or relationships. Such interaction, however innocent, may render the staff member vulnerable to allegations of abuse.

1.12 It is recognised that individual music tutors must work with students alone in enclosed studios. External monitoring is made possible with a window in each studio door.

1.13 Corporal punishment is unacceptable and is not tolerated at Blue Mountains Grammar School. Violence (physical or verbal) is an inappropriate behaviour management strategy at the School. Therefore, it is unacceptable for a member of staff to touch a student “in anger” whilst disciplining a student. Similarly, it is inappropriate for a staff member to shout in anger at a student in an excessive or violent manner.

1.14 In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for staff to invite a student home or to accept an invitation to visit a student’s home. This should only occur with the knowledge and approval of the student’s parent or caregiver. Staff are not permitted to be alone with a student in a private home.

1.15 Staff who socialise with students outside school can place themselves in a potentially vulnerable position regarding allegations of child abuse or may find themselves compromised professionally. If in doubt, staff should seek the advice of the Principal in advance of attending a private student function, (e.g. Valedictory parties).

1.16 Where staff are acting in loco parentis, they must not supply or condone the use of alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs, for themselves or any student in their care.

1.17 Staff must always treat students with respect and without favouritism. There is no place for personal sarcasm, derogatory remarks, inappropriate familiarity or personally offensive comments in staff interactions with students. How staff talk about students outside their presence also needs care.

1.18 Staff who communicate with students electronically must abide by the terms and conditions as outlined in the School’s Computer/Internet User Policy.
protection concerns include any communication which is indecent, impolite, defamatory, obscene, abusive, or which advocates illegal acts of violence or discrimination towards others. Transmission of messages or files containing sexually explicit images or words to students is totally inappropriate.

2. **Touching Guidelines**

2.1 Where physical contact is a necessary part of duty of care or of coaching, staff will exercise caution to ensure that such contact is appropriate, reasonable and not excessive.

2.2 It is sometimes appropriate for staff to touch students when congratulating them. However, conveying any impression of intimacy is problematic. Therefore, a handshake, a pat on the shoulder, or a brief hug is acceptable. Kissing of students is not an acceptable form of congratulation.

2.3 Comforting of a student in distress is a necessary part of a staff member’s pastoral care. It is appropriate for a staff member to put an arm around a student in this context if the student is happy being comforted in this way. However, intimate contact such as stroking, sitting the student/child on one’s knee is unacceptable. (In the case of children in the Infants Department in distress, comforting of the child by sitting him/her on a teacher’s knee may be appropriate.).

2.4 Coaching demonstration should be conducted in the company of other students rather than alone. In cases where a member of staff must touch a student during demonstration, they should clearly seek the permission of the student to do so. “Do you mind helping me demonstrate how to hold the javelin?” “Do you mind if I show you how to do this?” Staff must be sensitive to responses, especially those indicating a reluctance to be touched or obvious discomfort expressed by body language.

2.5 Medical assessment and treatment will often render touching necessary. Staff must ensure that students are aware that they will be touched for assessment or treatment – “I am going to see where your leg hurts by applying pressure in some places. Is that alright?” “I am going to massage your calf muscle, OK?” First-aid and paramedical personnel will have undertaken appropriate clearance. Where possible it may be advisable for an adult to stay with a student being treated both to protect the first-aid officer and to offer reassurance to the student.

2.6 The safety of an individual student in an emergency may sometimes require physical contact. Catching or grabbing a student to avoid a fall is an instinctive reaction and the safety of a student must take priority. In such cases, the principle of “reasonable judgement” applies. Appropriate physical restraint may also be required to prevent a student from self harm or harming others.

2.7 There are particular times in the life of the School when emotions of staff and students will be more intense than normal (e.g. Valedictory Day, a shared school celebration, or the funeral of a member of the School community). In such a context, guidelines regarding touching are, appropriately, more relaxed. However any touching of students in such exceptional circumstances may not occur in private.
3. Billeting Guidelines

3.1 The visiting and host school will appoint a co-ordinator to ensure that lines of communication are known to all students, their parents and host families. The guidelines will be circulated and understood by all parties. The Co-ordinator must have a mobile telephone and ensure that all students have access to the number.

3.2 Participating students should have access to supervising staff at all times. The overriding principle remains “to act in the best interests of the child”. Where the well-being or safety of a child appears to be at risk, or if the child expresses discomfort, or unease, the child should be removed from the situation immediately.

3.3 In arranging billets, every attempt will be made to ensure compatibility between the visiting student and host family. Where possible, students should be billeted in pairs to provide additional security.

3.4 Parents or caregivers of students to be billeted must complete consent forms and medical information forms. Host families will sign an acknowledgement of the conditions, and a Prohibited Employment Declaration.

3.5 Students should be reminded of their obligations as guests and, at the same time, provided with information on things that can go wrong and strategies for keeping themselves safe.

3.6 No unplanned alterations to billeting arrangements may be made without the explicit approval of the co-ordinator.

3.7 At all times, care for students in billets remains the ultimate responsibility of the Head of Agency.