



AB500 – Workplace Conduct: Employee interactions with students

Oakwood School maintains an employee handbook, which provides guidelines relating to healthy relationships between Employees and students. In compliance with Assembly Bill 500, section 44050 of the California Education Code, we are providing a written copy of our policy to the parent or guardian of each enrolled student. This policy can also be found on the school's website.

Standards of Professionalism

All employees are expected to support the school's philosophy, policies, rules, and regulations and to do so in a manner that reflects the standards of professionalism, quality, and integrity embraced by Oakwood.

Employees are expected to share the responsibility for maintaining an environment which is conducive to learning, mutual respect, teamwork, communication, and a sense of community pride. When differences arise, employee conduct must remain professional. It is detrimental, as well as unethical, for employees to talk with parents or students in a manner which demeans the competence of their colleagues; even idle collegial gossip can seriously divide and erode morale.

Sensitivity, courtesy, and respectfulness are essential elements of relationships among employees, between employees and parents, and between employees and students.

Communications with Parents

Oakwood depends on professional, clear, and prompt communications with parents. Teachers are required to communicate in a timely way with parents whenever concerns arise, and to review all sensitive correspondence with the appropriate Dean or Principal before such correspondence is sent.

Relationships with Parents and Students

Oakwood depends on relationships between employees and students, and between school and home, that are characterized by trust, openness, and respect. In view of the familial ethos of the school, and the close personal relationships that frequently develop, it is essential for employees to:

1. Refrain from promising parents or students to keep confidential information from the school. When information that may bear on a child's or adolescent's mental or physical health and safety comes to the attention of an employee, the employee must inform his/her supervisor immediately.
2. Maintain appropriate boundaries. Children and adolescents can be emotionally vulnerable and can develop excessive feelings of dependence. Employees must exercise great care to avoid strengthening such dependence and, in any way, encouraging the inappropriate affections of a minor.
3. Avoid any form of improper relationship between a teacher and a student as it is strictly forbidden, and grounds for immediate termination of employment. The school is legally obligated to report felonious activity, including sexual relationships between adults and children, to law enforcement authorities.

Employee Conduct

We are committed to maintaining a working environment, which protects the safety and dignity of each employee and ensures that the school meets its commitment to its community.

Employees are required to know, observe, and recognize the following rules of inappropriate and unacceptable conduct. This list is not all-inclusive. The conduct included on this list and other inappropriate conduct may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

(over)

- Possessing, using, distributing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs at any time while conducting school business or while on school property, or possessing, consuming or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages while conducting school business.
- Possessing weapons, firearms, or ammunition on school property.
- Engaging in any unethical conduct, including soliciting or accepting any gratuity, favor, gift, or entertainment from anyone who reasonably believes they might benefit from your connection to the school.
- Uttering, publishing, or distributing false, vicious, or malicious statements concerning the school or any of its employees, students, parents, or trustees.
- Using abusive language or engaging in disruptive or discourteous behavior.
- Deliberately or through gross negligence causing injury to another person, or committing gross negligence or carelessness.
- Reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or other drugs or in any other condition which impairs your ability to perform your regular duties and responsibilities and/or which presents a hazard to the safety or welfare of yourself or others.
- Gambling or being involved in any activity connected with unapproved gambling, including lotteries or games of chance while on Oakwood's premises or while engaged in school business away from Oakwood's premises.
- Stealing, falsifying, abusing, or destroying Oakwood's records, documents of any kind, property or equipment. Repair of Oakwood's property or equipment, which is damaged as the result of willful abuse or destruction, will be at the expense of the person or persons responsible for the damage.
- Violating Oakwood's policies concerning security, unauthorized disclosure of confidential information to any person(s), or unauthorized removal of school records, documents, or property from Oakwood.

Oakwood supports the professionalism and reputation of each and every employee and wants to assure the protection of all. Should an employee be accused or under investigation for any alleged infraction or misconduct involving a minor or any act of violence, notice of such accusation or investigation must be reported to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) immediately. Oakwood will make the determination as to how to best assure the privacy and protection of all parties involved.

Employee Discipline

Oakwood requires employees to abide by its rules, policies, procedures, and practices and perform their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the professional standards outlined in this Handbook. It may be necessary for the school to take disciplinary action when an employee fails to meet the school's performance, attendance, conduct, or other expectations. It is the intent of the disciplinary process to notify employees of misconduct so employees do not repeat the conduct and thereby maintain the employment relationship.

Oakwood, in its sole discretion, will determine whether circumstances warrant disciplinary action and, if so, what type of discipline is warranted. Examples of possible disciplinary action include, but are not limited to verbal warnings, written warnings, suspension, and termination of employment.