

Policy	Personal Relationships (Students) Policy SS 53
Document owner	Head of Student Services
Date first implemented	Pre-2014
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Associated documents	Mental Capacity Act Policy Safeguarding Policy Professional Boundaries Policy
Reference documents and Frameworks	The Equality Act 2010 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Code of Practice Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) – DfE (Latest version) Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) statutory guidance – DfE (2019) Children Act 1989 & 2004 SEND Code of Practice (2015) Human Rights Act 1998 Sexual Offences Act 2003 Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government) Local Safeguarding Adults Board Policies and Procedures (e.g. Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin or the student's local area)
Initial reviewing body	Head of Student Services
Final approval body	Safeguarding Committee
Published on website	Yes

Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to ensure a coherent and consistent approach towards supporting and educating students about personal relationships and what is and isn't acceptable within different relationships. It seeks to ensure a proper balance between an individual's rights and responsibilities, their physical and emotional safety, and the rights and responsibilities of others.
Scope	This policy applies to all students and staff.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	<i>“Derwen College is committed to promoting equality, good relations and to challenging discrimination. This is reflected in all College policies, procedures, processes and practices.”</i> <i>Derwen College Equal Opportunities Policy</i> Derwen College’s ethos is to embrace diversity, to offer equality of opportunity, and to treat every individual fairly and with respect. Equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded throughout the organisation. This policy should be applied in accordance with this ethos. If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print, please contact the Human Resources Department who will provide help with alternative formats.
Definition(s)	Within this policy the word ‘student’ will be used to describe all of the groups that attend Derwen College, this includes residential students, day students, short breaks guests and clients. Within this policy the words “sexual relationship” and “sexuality” are intended to include heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transgender relationships.

Personal Relationships Policy

1. Policy Statement

Derwen College recognises that personal and intimate relationships, including sexual expression, are an important aspect of life and identity. All students have the right to enjoy safe, healthy, respectful, and consensual relationships. The College is committed to promoting these rights while ensuring safeguarding, dignity, and wellbeing are central to all support offered.

This policy applies to all students and staff across the College, including satellite sites and residences.

2. Principles and Rights

Derwen College promotes the right of all students to:

- Experience loving, consenting relationships (sexual or non-sexual).
- Receive education and information about bodies, consent, relationships, and sexual health, tailored to individual need.
- Develop relationships that are legal, safe, and respectful.
- Be protected from abuse, exploitation, or coercion.
- Express their sexual identity and orientation without discrimination.
- Choose whether or not to have a sexual relationship.

- Access support and advocacy where needed to navigate relationships.

3. Education and Information

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is a statutory requirement up to age 16, as per the **Education Act 1996** and **Department for Education Statutory Guidance (2019)**. For students aged 16+, Derwen College continues to provide RSE and Health Education as good practice, ensuring:

- Age-appropriate and accessible resources.
- Sessions tailored to individual learning needs, communication styles, and cognitive levels.
- Opportunities for both group-based and 1:1 learning.
- Open, inclusive discussions about sexuality, relationships, gender identity, and consent.

Where needed, students are supported to explore topics with key workers, the nursing team, or external agencies.

4. Consent and Capacity

Capacity to consent to relationships and sexual activity is assessed in line with the **Mental Capacity Act 2005** and the college's internal **Mental Capacity and Decision-Making Procedure**.

Staff:

- Presume capacity unless proven otherwise.
- Support students with information, resources, and accessible communication methods to help them understand decisions.
- Involve families or external professionals (e.g. social workers) when required and with the student's permission.
- Seek safeguarding and legal advice where there are concerns about capacity or exploitation.

5. Privacy, Space, and Boundaries

Students have the right to privacy in their relationships. Derwen College supports students to:

- Access each other's accommodation for social or romantic visits, where capacity and consent are clear.
- Make decisions about their own bodies and behaviours in private spaces.
- Access contraception and sexual health services confidentially.
- Express affection appropriately in line with public/private behaviour guidance.

Note: Overnight stays in another student's room are not permitted for reasons of health, safety, and fire compliance unless a specific agreement is in place ahead of time.

Staff will support students by:

- Facilitating private space where appropriate.
- Helping students access condoms and contraception.
- Discussing what is appropriate in public vs private settings.
- Offering guidance on respectful, safe, and lawful relationship behaviours.

6. Safeguarding and Reporting Concerns

All staff must be vigilant to signs of:

- Coercion, exploitation, grooming, or abuse.
- Unhealthy or unsafe relationships (including peer-to-peer abuse).
- Students engaging in sexual activity without sufficient understanding or capacity.

Any concerns must be reported immediately to the **Safeguarding Team**, following the College's **Safeguarding Policy**. In cases of immediate risk, the police or relevant authorities must be contacted without delay.

7. Confidentiality

Students have a right to confidential advice and support. However, confidentiality will be broken if:

- There is a risk of harm to the student or another individual.
- The student lacks capacity to make a safe decision.
- There is suspected abuse, exploitation, or criminal activity.

Where information must be shared, students will be kept informed and involved wherever possible.

8. Staff Conduct and Professional Boundaries

Staff must:

- Maintain clear professional boundaries.
- Avoid expressing personal beliefs in ways that influence or restrict student rights.
- Respond to students' questions or behaviours with sensitivity and factual information.
- Seek supervision and guidance where they are unsure or uncomfortable.

Managers must ensure that staff are confident and competent in implementing this policy, and that training and supervision are regularly reviewed.

9. Touch and Affection

Students are supported to understand:

- What kinds of touch are appropriate in different settings and relationships.

- That touch can be misinterpreted or misunderstood.
- How to express or decline affection safely and respectfully.

Staff must also set clear boundaries around physical contact, modelling appropriate behaviour at all times.

References and Legal Framework

This policy is underpinned by the following:

- **The Mental Capacity Act 2005 & Code of Practice**
- **Education Act 1996 (sections 403 & 405)**
- **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (DfE, 2019)**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Children Act 1989 & 2004**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE)**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government)**
- **Sexual Offences Act 2003**
- **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**
- **Local Safeguarding Adults Board Procedures**