

Guidelines for the prevention of abusive acts, including sexual harassment at Struer Statsgymnasium's boarding school

Struer Statsgymnasium expects both its boarding students and boarding staff to contribute to creating a safe, nurturing environment for an unforgettable boarding school experience characterized by community, shared experiences, and personal space for individual expression. It is crucial that everyone's conduct fosters an environment where growth, development, and preparation for independent life thrive. The optimal conditions for this are only possible when boarding students flourish.

Hence, any form of violation is unacceptable.

Offensive Behavior

Offensive behavior refers to the infringement of another person's dignity, which can manifest physically or psychologically. This behavior can stem from factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, age, or disability. The perception of the individual who experienced abusive behavior determines its existence, irrespective of whether the actions were inadvertent or intentional in their intent to harm.

What Constitutes Sexual Violations?

Sexual violations encompass various forms that might not be perceived similarly by the perpetrator and the victim. They can range from overt bullying to actions where the abuser might not be conscious of crossing personal boundaries.

Examples include:

- unwanted sexual attention
- sexist or derogatory comments
- sharing offensive content on social media without consent
- unwanted physical contact
- abuse

Who Can be the Offender?

The offender could be one or more boarding school students, a guest, boarding staff, other school employees, management, a board member, or the principal.

Prevention

Boarding School Students:

We take proactive measures to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment, preventing bullying and sexual abuse. This includes familiarizing students with the school's values and culture, and the school's Rules and Regulations during the introductory period, monitoring their well-being by class teachers, conducting mandatory annual student well-being surveys, implementing a policy for handling student complaints, an anti-bullying strategy, and rules for SSG Instagram profiles. Additionally, starting from the 2023-24 academic year, all students will receive mandatory sex education covering topics like consent, gender, and sexuality.

Similar efforts are made to acquaint students with boarding school rules, values, and through introductory talks by staff members. The boarding school conducts annual surveys to measure boarding student well-being and appoints trustees.

During the annual information meeting for new boarding students and their parents, information is given about the various policies and guidelines, just as they are available on the school's website.

Boarding Staff:

All boarding staff are expected to exhibit a high degree of professional and ethical awareness. The boarding school aims to create a nurturing environment, where staff serve as adult role models, showing care, personal commitment, and the ability to guide students toward self-sufficiency.

Professional ethics at SSG consists on two layers:

Core Values:

Professionalism

Boarding staff collectively establish the domestic framework for boarding school life, achieved through high professional standards in their core tasks while understanding their responsibility in shaping the collective educational experience.

Relationship building

Staff engage with individual students with both closeness and realism, acknowledging each student's current state and striving to support their development. This approach begins with acknowledging and supporting students, aiming to challenge them appropriately for greater chances of success.

Commitment

Maintaining a relationship with our students requires a commitment from the staff, both to the core task and the broader educational responsibilities.

The standard of practice for the boarding staff is:

- To engage with the boarding students with recognition, respect, interest and trust
- To focus on students' strengths
- To serve as a role model with respect to how we communicate and how we behave
- To maintain professional closeness without blurring boundaries
- To respect the boarders' privacy

Adherence to professional ethics ensures that SSG's boarding school:

- Protects students from abuse
- Demonstrates appropriate care and discretion in matters concerning students' well-being
- Upholds professional relationships with boarding school students
- Acknowledges individual needs and provides guidance for each boarding school student's full potential
- Cultivates a sense of community and inclusivity among students at the boarding school
- Exercises authority with fairness and compassion

These ethics are integrated into the recruitment process, new staff training, and discussed annually in staff meetings to maintain awareness.

Handling Possible Violations

In the event of a boarding student experiencing abusive behavior, they can approach the headmaster, who will initiate further investigation. Additionally, support is available from staff members, guidance counsellors, or coaches for initial discussions.

Should the accused be the headmaster, the chairman of Struer Statsgymnasium must be contacted. The vice-principal takes over management tasks in such cases. Otherwise, the principal handles the investigation, beginning with a conversation with the complainant to understand their perspective and preferences regarding handling, confidentiality, or further steps. The school's management decides on the course of action and determines if it constitutes bullying, harassment, or degrading behavior. If the complainant is under 18, parental involvement is required.

Complainants are informed that complaints cannot be anonymous, and the principal is obliged to document the case's progress. The accused party is presented with the allegations, with precautions against false accusations.

The investigation cannot be kept secret from the accused, but all involved parties are informed, and witnesses may be involved as part of the process. Both parties have access to a supporter, and parental involvement is mandatory for parties under 18.

Further steps include contacting relevant authorities, temporary suspension depending on the situation's severity, immediate removal of offensive content shared on social media, and informing both parties about the investigation's progress and outcomes. Psychological support is offered to the complainant, accused, and any affected students.

Should the complainant choose to file a police report, the school's investigation ceases, irrespective of the progress made under this contingency plan.

Educational Follow-up:

If no sanctions align with the school's rules, the Head of the boarding school and the Principal decide on any necessary educational measures such as:

- Conflict mediation
- Written reflection
- Temporary removal from the school

Expulsion

Expulsion is considered only when the behavior is deemed so severe that it cannot be resolved educationally. The principal holds decision-making authority for expulsion, aiming to support the expelled student in finding a new school.

Notification and Confidentiality

While confidentiality is paramount, certain cases require notification despite this obligation. All information pertaining to sexual abuse, even if disclosed confidentially by a student, obliges reporting due to increased notification obligations.

Appeal Process

Students (and parents of those under 18) have the right to appeal inadequate responses to cases of sexual abuse. The appeal must be justified and addressed to the chairman of the board.