



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1. AIM AND OBJECTIVES FOR THIS POLICY

The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance around the subject of confidentiality that everyone involved with the school including pupils, parents and carers can understand and work within. This policy is a vital part of meeting pupil's welfare needs as required by the Education Act (2002).

This policy will provide a clear and consistent message for pupils, staff, parents / carers and visitors about confidentiality in school.

It will provide guidance about who needs to know what in particular instances and will respect every individual's right to privacy.

2. CONTEXT

- Confidentiality is a whole school issue.
- All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
- All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of age, gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special needs. Where data is generated in school by these categories individual children should not be able to be identified.
- All children, parents, staff members and directors have a right to privacy from gossip. All matters are dealt with according to the school's procedures and out of the eye of the wider community.
- Members of staff may come to possess sensitive information about pupils, or their families, some of it about illegal activity.
- Young people occasionally make personal disclosures, either in class or to individual teachers.
- All parties need to be clear about the rules of confidentiality, which apply in these circumstances.
- Sensitive and controversial issues are certain to arise in the teaching of some areas of the curriculum, for example areas covering personal and social health, sex and relationships, religious education, and politics. The aim of these lessons may be to enable pupils to address these issues directly and to develop the skills of reasoned argument. However they are examples of topics which cover values and beliefs and which may, therefore, arouse strong feelings. Other issues likely to be sensitive or controversial include family lifestyles and values, law and order, environmental issues, bullying and bereavement.

3. HOW THE OBJECTIVES WILL BE MET

- a) Information about pupils should not be passed on indiscriminately.
- b) All social care, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
- c) The Principal should be informed in most circumstances, and specifically in all cases that have any bearing on child protection and safeguarding. Should an individual decide not to inform the Principal they must have a valid reason and may be called on to justify this decision in the future.
- d) Staff have a contractual obligation with the policy.
- e) No member of staff, volunteer or director should discuss individual cases outside of the school, and within school no individual child should be discussed in the presence of another child or parent.
- f) Unconditional confidentiality should not be offered to pupils or their parents. Information about behaviour likely to cause harm to the pupil or to others must be passed on to the appropriate agency.
- g) It should be made clear to pupils that although most information can be kept confidential, some may need to be passed on in the young person's interest. However, the pupil should be informed about when this has to happen, what will be done with the information and who will have access to it.
- h) In the case of illegal activity the school should take actions in the best interest of the pupil. This does not necessarily involve informing the police. For example, members of staff are not obliged to inform the police about illegal drug activity.
- i) Outside agencies and others providing support for any area of the curriculum must be aware of and abide by, the school policy on disclosures and confidentiality. However, they may also have a role in providing advice and support directly to pupils. The boundary between these two roles must be agreed with the school and the distinction, in terms of the right to confidentiality, must be made clear to pupils.
- j) Some people, Health and other Professionals, are bound by their own professional codes of conduct and confidentiality in their work with children and young people i.e. the medical code of confidentiality (FRASER Guide Lines). Pupils, who seek help from teachers about their personal health e.g. contraception or pregnancy can be referred to their family Doctor or another relevant professional, whose professional code of practice will be followed.
- k) In lessons, teaching staff should establish from the beginning that it is inappropriate to disclose personal information. Ground rules must be set before discussion commences which ensure pupils agree not to pressure one another to answer questions about their own experiences. These ground rules also apply to staff.
- l) In line with the above, when dealing with sensitive or controversial issues teaching staff should:-
 - Ensure pupils establish ground rules about how they will behave towards each other and how issues will be dealt with.
 - Judge when to allow pupils to discuss issues on their own in small groups and when to join in and offer support.

- Ensure that pupils are clear about the difference between fact, opinion, and belief and that they have access to balanced information and views against which they can then clarify their own opinions and views including contributions made by visitors to the classroom.
 - Decide how far they are prepared to express their own views, bearing in mind that they are in an influential position and that they have to work within the school's values framework.
 - Provide appropriate support after a session for any pupil who may be troubled by an issue raised.
- m) It is important that all staff are consistent in their support for pupils / young people in their care.
- n) If in doubt seek advice from the Principal.

4. GIVING INFORMATION TO PARENTS/ CARERS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN

- a) The school prides itself on good communication with parents and carers, and staff are available to talk to both children and parents about issues that are causing concern.
- b) Parents are specifically informed about accidents and injuries that occur whilst their child is at school, and are also informed about any health concerns, behaviour changes and incidents.
- c) Where concerns deem it necessary, the member of staff or the parent may request a meeting to discuss issues or incidents more fully. Such discussions are carried out in a private room.
- d) Staff do not enter into detailed discussion about another child's behaviour or progress.
- e) Staff must make parents aware that they can never offer complete confidentiality as they have a legal duty to pass on information if they suspect that someone is at risk of harm.
- f) Members of staff are not obliged to pass on confidential information about pupils to their parents / carers although where the member of staff believes the pupil to be at moral or physical risk, or in breach of the law they must ensure that the pupil is aware of the risks and encourage them to seek support from their parents and may support the child to talk to their parents.
- g) Parents of children in the Children's House and Cosmic Education classes are informed of academic progress and attitudes and dispositions towards learning during the year through written reports and parent/ teacher conferences.

5. DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

- The policy will be made available to all. A copy will be placed on the school website and hard copies will be available on request from the office.
- Confidentiality will be discussed with pupils as part of either their personal and social development (through grace and courtesy activities and discussions) or as part of Peace Education, depending on the class that the children attend and the children's age and levels of understanding.
- The policy will be available for teaching staff, non-teaching staff, volunteers, students and people on work placements, directors, parent / carers and visitors.
- This policy is regularly reviewed with staff at the September Staff day and with new members of staff at their induction.
- Reference to this policy is made in the Parents Handbook.

6. PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Records will be kept of any incidents / complaints.
- The policy will be reviewed on a biannual basis.
- The Principal will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

APPENDIX

SIX KEY POINTS ON INFORMATION SHARING

1. You should explain to children, young people and families at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will, or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement. The exception to this is where to do so would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or if it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.
2. You must always consider the safety and welfare of a child or young person when making decisions on whether to share information about them. Where there is concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration.
3. You should, where possible, respect the wishes of children, young people or families who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information, if in your judgement on the facts of the case, there is sufficient need to override that lack of consent.
4. You should seek advice where you are in doubt, especially where your doubt relates to a concern about possible significant harm to a child or serious harm to others.
5. You should ensure that the information you share is accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, shared only with those people who need to see it and shared securely.
6. You should always record the reasons for your decision – whether it is to share information or not.

It is important that practitioners understand when, why and how they should share information so that they can do so confidently and appropriately as part of their day-to-day practice.