





Review Cycle:-	Every two years	Date of Next Review:-	Nov 2024
Approver:- Chair of Governors	Signed:-  Date:-09/11/2023	Approver:- Head Teacher	Signed:-  Date:-09/11/2023

Confidentiality Policy

1) Introduction

This policy has been written using guidance from Guidance to schools on Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education, Department for Education 2019, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.

2) Definition

a) The overall meaning of a confidential relationship is openness and agreement about what will happen to information disclosed between two, or more, people. Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'. In our school there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered. We strive to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, eg. in relation to child protection issues, good practice is followed.

b) Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances. Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to prioritising children's safety and well-being. The pupil will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason. Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances. Individual faiths and beliefs must be taken into account.

3) Aims of the Confidentiality Policy

- To protect the child at all times.
- To ensure all members of staff working on the school site are clear about the levels of confidentiality that they can offer to the school community and expect themselves.

4) Objective

- For everyone (staff and governors, pupils and parents) to understand the varying levels of confidentiality which might be offered in different circumstances

5) Guidelines

a) Confidentiality and pupils

- i) We recognise that there are occasions when pupils are worried about something and feel that they cannot talk about it to their parents/carers. This can result in enormous stress for the individual which impacts on their education and health. Some pupils may feel that they can turn to teachers and other staff members for support and we want to be as helpful as we can whilst recognising that there may be some potential difficulties in being supportive. All school staff should adhere to the following policy:
- ii) Unconditional confidentiality cannot be offered when a pupil first begins to talk about something where this may become an issue
- iii) It will be explained to the child that if there is a child protection issue where the pupils, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, the school's DSL will need to be informed, who may have to involve other agencies. This information will be explained to the child in an age-appropriate way. (Please refer to the school's child protection procedures for further advice on this aspect.)
- iv) School staff can only offer confidentiality to pupils on issues that do not involve significant illegal activities e.g. theft, arson, criminal damage. If the conversation begins to move to this kind of issue, the pupil must be warned that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- v) In all cases where it is deemed necessary to break confidentiality with the pupil, the reasons will be clearly explained and the child will be reassured that their best interests will be maintained (unless there is very good reason not to inform them e.g. risk of harm).
- vi) In talking with pupils, staff will encourage children to talk to their parents/carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate
- vii) Pupils should be made aware of the specialist confidential services that may be available in the school community.

b) Confidentiality and Staff and Governors

- i) Relationships between and amongst staff and governors need to be based on openness and trust.
- ii) Access to the Employee Support Scheme is available to all staff and is confidential.
- iii) Any use of the Staff Disciplinary Procedure (as detailed in the Manual of Personnel Procedures) will be confidential to the parties involved.
- iv) All staff can expect that their personal situations and health will remain confidential unless it impinges on their terms of contract or endangers pupils or other members of staff.

c) Confidentiality and families

- i) We recognise that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a pupil and which the family will only disclose to us if they can be sure the information will be treated confidentially.
- ii) We will respect the wishes of the family and where it is felt necessary to share the information given to us, this will be discussed with the parent first unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection concern.

d) Confidentiality and Visitors

- i) A 'Visitor' in this context is any person who works in school either in a paid or a voluntary capacity. In some instances, the visitor may become privy to personal information regarding pupils, parents and staff that is of a confidential nature.

ii) All Visitors are made aware of this Confidentiality Policy before working in school.

e) Confidentiality and Social Networking sites.

i) In recent years, the use of social networking sites has become increasingly popular. Such sites are used to share information, photographs and news with friends across the world. Whilst the use of such sites has very many benefits there are potential problems concerning privacy and appropriate usage. These may include breaches of confidentiality, unsuitable language or images, and in some cases breaches of the law.

ii) Examples of such problematic usage of publicly accessible social networking could be:

- Staff referring to children by name
- Staff referring to school/ business matters
- Staff using derogatory or offensive language about children or colleagues
- Staff posting images of themselves in inappropriate dress or situations
- Staff participating in illegal activities
- Partners or friends posting inappropriate comments concerning staff
- Partners and friends posting images that show staff members in situations which may not be in keeping with their professional status

iii) Whilst it is not intended to govern colleagues' private use of social networking, all members of the school community should be aware of expectations around online behaviour that could affect confidentiality, professional standing, integrity and dignity.

iv) With this in mind staff are advised

- Not to allow themselves to enter into online (social networking site) contact with families of children to protect staff and the public from abuse and misunderstandings.
- Never to enter into online (social networking site) contact with children who attend our school to protect staff and the public from abuse and misunderstandings.
- To be careful about what they say online in such social networking sites when in contact with other people such as relatives or family friends. This caution should also apply to images or video material.
- To take great care if socially contacting colleagues. Staff need to be mindful of what they are posting and who can see it. This is important in respect of confidentiality, workplace relationships, and the fact that their online contacts may not appreciate the difference between private and professional comments.

v) Staff privacy and dignity - recommendations and advice

- Staff are strongly recommended to check that their online privacy settings only allow "friends" to see their profiles. These should be checked at regular intervals as updates to services can alter these settings.
- It is also advised that as a general measure to protect their personal safety and identity, staff do not accept friend requests from people who are not personally known to them.
- Staff may wish to ask friends to check before photographs are posted which may cause them embarrassment. Staff posting their own images should bear in mind the fact that any image can easily be downloaded and manipulated and they should choose which images they share accordingly.
- It is recommended that staff do not post images that could be used to identify their homes or families.
- Staff should also be aware of the privacy settings that 'friends' use as comments posted on these sites could be more widely accessible than is intended.

6) Lines of Responsibility and Referral

a) If a member of the school community receives information where they believe a child protection issue is addressed, they should refer the case to the designated teacher (often the Designated Safeguarding Lead within the school). The person must make it clear to the pupil that they will be passing on the information but that the information will remain confidential between them and the DSL. If confidentiality has to be broken, the child must be informed first.

b) A teacher does not have a general duty to inform the head teacher of disclosures by a pupil. The decision as to whether to do so must be a matter for a teacher's discretion, having regard for child protection issues.

7) Equal Opportunities

We will ensure that all children, parents and staff have a right to confidentiality, as determined by this policy, regardless of any differentials in their gender, race, faith, sexuality, and abilities. There can be no excuse for breaching confidentiality or deviating from this policy based on perceptions of circumstances.