



Confidentiality Policy

Aim

To protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff.

Rationale

At Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy we believe that:

- the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are paramount in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' well-being and safety.
- it is an essential part of the school ethos that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek both help within and outside the school in order to minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns, including relationships.
- the school's attitude to confidentiality is easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- issues concerning personal information can arise at any time.
- everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- everyone in the school community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health, relationship, sexual or other personal issue they want to discuss.

Policy Development

- a member of the governing body has reviewed and agreed this policy.
- the policy is disseminated to all staff.

Definition of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'.

The confider is asking for the content of the conversation to be kept secret. Anyone offering absolute confidentiality to someone else would be offering to keep the content of his or her own conversation completely secret and discuss it with no-one.

In practice there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our school. 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 ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection/safeguarding issues and good practice are followed.



This means that in most cases what is offered is limited confidentiality. 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 related to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The pupils will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in the information sharing.

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances:

1 In the classroom in the course of a lesson

Given by a member of the teaching staff or an outside visitor, including health professionals

Careful thought needs to be given to the content of the lesson, setting the climate and establishing ground rules to ensure confidential disclosures are not made. It should be made clear to pupils that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential personal information, but ensure that you address the issue before the end of the school day. When a health professional is contributing to a school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working within the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

2 One-to-one disclosure to members of school staff

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents/carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available for the pupil or parent/carer, within the school and from other agencies where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage pupils to discuss different issues with their parents/carers and vice versa. The safeguarding policy is followed at all times.

However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests. There are occasions when sharing information with parents/carers could put the safety of the pupil at risk.

The Legal Position for School Staff

School staff should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents/carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this school's staff can or should give such a promise.

The safety, well-being and protection of the child are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

School staff and **not** obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue, however at Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy we believe it is important staff are able to share concerns about pupil's safety and well-being is maintained.



Illegal Activity

- Members of staff are not obliged to inform police on most matters relating to illegal activity, such as illegal drugs activity or assaults.
- In the case of illegal activity, the school will discuss the possible consequences with the pupil and seek the course of action with the most positive outcomes for the pupil.

Teachers, counsellors and health professionals

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he or she should indicate to a child that the child could make a disclosure in confidence and whether such a confidence could then be maintained having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement the teacher, counsellor or health professional must consider the best interests of the child, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children and possible child protection/safeguarding issues.

All teachers at this school receive basic training in child protection/safeguarding as part of their induction to this school and are expected to follow the school's child protection/safeguarding policy and procedures.

Visitors and non-teaching staff

At Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy we expect all non-teaching staff to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers of a concerning nature to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Mrs Vanessa Higgins) as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. The DSO will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

Parents/carers

Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and will endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at school, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our pupils can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal issue with staff at Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy, the pupil will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parents/carers and may be supported to do so where it is appropriate.

Complex Cases

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy will consult the MASH team at Wiltshire Council.

When information must be shared and the procedures for doing this

We will explain to the child that we must share information to make sure they are helped if we are worried that:

- they are hurting themselves,
- someone is hurting them,
- they are hurting someone else.



Also, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where:

- a pupil needs urgent medical treatment,
- where a serious crime is involved,
- where safeguarding national security is involved, eg terrorism.

The principles we follow at Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy are that in all cases we:

- ensure the time and place are appropriate, when they are not we reassure the child that we understand they need time to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy.
- aim to see the child before the end of the school day, except in cases of neglect or abuse when the child will always be seen before the end of the school day. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child or ask leading questions.
- do not interrogate the child or ask leading questions.
- will not put children in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people.
- inform the pupil first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this.
- encourage the pupil, whenever possible to confide in her/her parents/carers.

See the Child Protection Policy for further safeguarding details.

Support for Staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of pupils. At Whitesheet C of E Primary Academy we urge staff to seek help rather than possibly make a poor decision because they do not have all the facts or the necessary training, or allow school based issues to transgress into their personal life. Staff should discuss any concerns with the Head Teacher.

Links with other policies

This policy has links with all our safeguarding policies – please see Safeguarding Policy file.

Spring Term 2020

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