



SCHOOL CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Date of Policy Review : November 2016

Next Review Date : November 2018

Signed


Chair of Governors

RATIONALE

At St. Peter's CE Primary School we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are the paramount consideration 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 ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek help both 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 sex and 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 including sex and relationships and other personal matters 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, sex and relationship or other personal issue they want to discuss.

DATA PROTECTION

Confidentiality does not just relate to disclosures of information. The following measures are in place to ensure confidential information is dealt with appropriately:

- St Peter's C E Primary School processes personal information about its pupils and is the data controller in respect of that information. It processes this information to :
 - support its pupils teaching and learning;
 - monitor and report on their progress;
 - provide appropriate pastoral care, and
 - assess how well the school as a whole is doing.

From time to time the school is required to pass on some of this data to local authorities, the DCSF and to agencies that are prescribed by law. Reference to these organisations is referred to in the Fair Processing Notice Layer2 which is provided by the DCSF. This notice is made available to parents through the school website.

- Pupil records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the school office. Most pupil files are retained for 7 years and then destroyed. If the records contain SEN statements or exclusion details we follow the Retention Schedule guidance.
- Personal information, other than essential medical emergency details, is not stored in the staff room and is not displayed on notice boards.
- All school staff have access to a private space where personal telephone calls can be made or taken.
- Discussing pupil, family or other staff members' personal matters in a general way is discouraged.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A wide consultation has taken place with the whole school community, including our family of schools. The final policy was agreed by the leadership team and the school's governing body, and has been widely disseminated to staff and partner agencies. It is also available to parents/carers on the schools website.

The policy is disseminated to all new staff joining the school.

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 conversation completely secret and discuss it with no-one.

In practise 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 and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and good practise 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 pupil 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 teaching staff or an outside visitor, including health professionals. Careful thought needs to be given to the content of the lesson setting the client 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. When a health professional is contributing to a

school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

2. One-to-one disclosures 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 and carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both 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 or carers and vice versa.

However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

3. Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in the school

Disclosures to a counsellor are confidential between the pupil and counsellor unless the nature of the disclosure is a child protection matter. Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils, when accompanied by a parent/carer, provided they are competent to do so and follow the Fraser Guidelines (guidelines for doctors and other health professionals on giving medical advice to under 16's). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people.

THE LEGAL POSITION FOR SCHOOL STAFF

All school staff should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents or 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 is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

School staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue, however at St. Peters we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about pupils' safety and well-being is maintained,

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 interest of the child, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children and possible child protection issues.

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

Counsellors and Health Professionals

At St. Peter's we offer pupils the support of a school counsellor. These services are confidential between the counsellor and the individual pupil. No information is shared

with school staff except as defined in the school's child protection policy. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our pupils.

Visitors and non-teaching staff

At St. Peter's we expect all non-teaching staff to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers of a concerning nature to the designated child protection co-ordinator as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. The designated child protection co-ordinator will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

Parents/Carers

At St. Peter's we believe that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of this 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 St. Peter's, the pupil will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parents or carers and may be supported to do so where it is appropriate.

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

COMPLEX CASES

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, St. Peter's school will consult with the local area child protection team at Horsham Social Services.

WHEN CONFIDENTIALITY SHOULD BE BROKEN AND THE PROCEDURES FOR DOING THIS

See the School Child Protection Policy.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils. At St. Peter's we prefer staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because you don't have all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about pupils home with you.

Staff should discuss any concerns with the Headteacher.

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy has links with the following school policies:

- Child Protection/Safeguarding
- Fair Processing Notice provided by the DCSF
- PSHE
- Sex and Relationships
- Drug Education
- Behaviour

DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This policy has been distributed to all teaching and non-teaching staff. A copy of the policy can always be found in the staff room. All new staff receive a copy of the policy when they join the school.