

Confidentiality

Ashchurch Primary School



Approved by: R Gibson

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Next review due by: September 2023

Aims

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

Rationale

Ashchurch Primary School seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It seeks to implement the underlying principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda and to address the issues, which may arise about confidentiality. It is committed to developing creative and positive ways for the child's voice to be heard whilst recognising the responsibility to use, hold and safeguard information received. Sharing information unnecessarily is an erosion of trust. The school is mindful that it is placed in a position of trust by all stakeholders and there is a general expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality.

Objectives

- To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
- To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
- To ensure that staff, governors, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
- To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
- To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
- To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality
- To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all, including rigorous monitoring of cultural, gender and special educational needs
- To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
- To understand that health professionals are bound by a different code of conduct.
- To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

Guidelines

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
 2. All social services, 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.
 3. The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual.
 - a) There is a Designating Safeguarding Lead who has overall responsibility for Child Protection matters.
 - b) There is clear protocol for the handling of child protection incidents. All staff are regularly brought up to date on any child protection issues.
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- c) There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse.
- d) Staff are aware that effective sex and relationship education, which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue.
- e) Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
- f) Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and should follow the school's discipline policy.
- g) Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.

4. Parents/carers and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and that the school has a duty to report child protection issues.

5. The school prides itself on good communication with parents and carers, and staff are always available to talk to both children and parents/carers about issues that are causing concern. The school encourages children to talk to parents/carers about issues causing them concern and may, in some cases, support the children to talk to their parents. The school would share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities, unless the child is deemed to be in immediate danger or sexual abuse is suspected.

6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that in exceptional circumstances confidentiality will be broken.

7. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs. A lot of data is generated in schools by these categories but individual children should not be able to be identified.

8. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PSHE sessions dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationships and drugs. Strategies are in place and all children are aware of them for dealing with sensitive information, which may fall outside the boundaries of child protection procedures. School needs to be proactive so children feel supported but information is not unnecessarily revealed in a public arena. Even when sensitive information appears to be widely known it should not be assumed by those immediately involved that it is appropriate to discuss or share this information further.

9. Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should be accessible to staff who need that information but not on general view to other parents/carers and children.

10. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. This is often a cultural issue that the school needs to be aware of. At no time should the child's name be used with a photograph so that they can be identified.

11. Information about their child will be shared with parents. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time, especially at parents evening. However parents should be aware that information about their child

will be shared with the receiving school when they change school and between classes within the school.

12. All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by those who have access to them, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEN reports, SEN minutes of meetings and Social Services minutes of meetings and reports will be circulated in envelopes and once read should be returned for secure filing. Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure and each child should have their own individual log. In all other notes, briefing sheets etc a child should not be able to be identified. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.

13. Governors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such papers should be marked as confidential and should be copied onto different coloured paper. These confidential papers should be destroyed. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents. Although decisions reached at Governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential. Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the governing body.

Guidelines for Practice

This policy is relevant to the teaching of PSHE, Drug Education and SRE. However it also covers all situations both in and out of the classroom.

Ground rules will be made explicit in lessons where appropriate. These should outline the following: -

- We will respect each other's views
- We will listen carefully to one another
- No put-downs!
- We don't name names or talk about things which are personal to us. If the teacher thinks that someone has said something that makes them think that they are being hurt in some way or are not safe, the teacher will talk to someone else about it. When the lesson is tackling particularly sensitive issues such as puberty, sex or drug education we will add another rule about that:-

Whatever we talk about in this lesson will stay between us. No gossiping in the playground.

Following guidance in our Child Protection Policy, where information of a sensitive nature is disclosed, this must be treated seriously and with sensitivity. Under no circumstances must a promise be made that you will not tell anyone else. Explain that in order to help, you may need to talk to other people. If a child indicates that they may be at risk of abuse, neglect or harm, you must seek further advice as indicated in our child protection policy.

In the following circumstances we will always break confidentiality:-

- o Threat to the life or immediate risk to the pupil
 - o Prevention of terrorism
 - o A third party is at risk of abuse or neglect
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o When you have been subpoenaed to a Court of Law

Following a disclosure:-

- o Agree with a child who you will speak to and what you will say
- o How you will continue to support them through the process.

‘Confidentiality’ also refers to protecting the information we hold about the pupils in our school and their families. All staff will endeavour to maintain confidentiality when appropriate, for example by considering the conversations they have about pupils and their families, the purpose of these conversations and where these take place. Staff should be especially vigilant when conversations are held out of the school premises. All students and helpers at the school will be made aware of this through our Confidentiality Statement.

Confidentiality Statement

Teachers talk about their job constantly. Conversations at breaks and lunchtimes are often about school, individual children and their families. We ask that such conversations are regarded as confidential. Similarly, the work, progress and behaviour of individual children is a matter of fact for the teacher, the child and the parents of the child. Any comments made to others about a child, or an incident at school at school may be misinterpreted and lead to misunderstandings. Small incidents are dealt with in school and should end there. More serious incidents will be discussed in confidence with parents. We feel sure that you will understand the need for confidentiality on school matters. As a Governor, member of staff, student or helper in the school we ask that you respect confidentiality on such matters to avoid misunderstandings and upset.

Thank you for your co-operation

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle by the Governors.
2. The PSHCE scheme of work, including Sex and Relationships policy and Drug Policy will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy in specified year groups.
3. The Head teacher has responsibility for monitoring this policy. Following any curriculum monitoring a positional statement is written which contributes to the School Development Plan.

Conclusion

Ashchurch Primary School has a duty of care and responsibility towards pupils, parents/carers and staff. It also needs to work with a range of outside agencies and share information on a professional basis. The care and safety of the individual is the key issue behind this document.
