



“Show me your way, Lord teach me your paths.” Psalms (25.4)

Confidentiality Policy

Aims of the policy

The overall aim of this policy is to protect the confidentiality of all persons where the school holds information that is confidential to that person or a group of persons. Generally speaking, information is confidential if it relates to a person or group of persons, who would not want it to be made freely available. There are occasions where information remains confidential even if it is already in the public domain (e.g. where there is already a confidentiality breach on social media). The intention of this policy is to give all persons having access to confidential information held by the school clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by all users of the school. The school has a duty of care and responsibility towards all persons who they hold confidential information on. In respect of pupils, there are special considerations that this policy seeks to address, as the school needs to work with a range of outside agencies and share information on a professional basis. Striking an effective and professional balance between these two aims is crucial to the success of a confidentiality policy. More specifically, this policy aims to:

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

Introduction

The school seeks to put the pupil 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 vision and aims of the school and to address issues which may arise about confidentiality. It is committed to developing creative and positive ways for the pupil'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.

Key Points

- A) No person shall look at any document or documents (paper or electronic) relating to another person without a legitimate reason. In considering what action, if any, the school will take should there be a breach of this part of the policy, the school will take into account all relevant factors including, but not limited to:
 - i) Whether there was a reasonable belief that there was a legitimate reason for accessing the document or documents; and whether it was accidental; and
 - ii) The nature of the information accessed and in particular the sensitivity of that information; and
 - iii) The motive (e.g. to benefit themselves, family and/or friends; curiosity; or a belief that it was in the interests of the person or persons concerned).
- B) No staff login details (Username/number or password) for the school's computers shall be shared with any other person apart from the School Administrator, except with express permission of the Executive Headteacher or the Co-Heads of School.
- C) In respect of Pupils:
 - i) All information about an individual pupil is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
 - ii) All social services, medical and personal information about a child is kept under lock and key in the school office or Executive Headteacher's office and cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
 - iii) The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual. Therefore,
 - a) The school has appointed a senior lead teacher for child protection who receives regular training. At Almondsbury CE Primary School this person is the Executive Headteacher.
 - b) There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents and all staff have regular training on child protection issues.

- 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.
- iv) Parents/carers and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and the school has a duty to report child protection issues. Parents/carers and children should be aware that in exceptional circumstances confidentiality will be broken.
 - v) 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.
 - vi) 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.
 - vii) Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set by staff for any classroom work such as circle time and other PHSE sessions dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationship and drugs. Staff need 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.
 - viii) 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.
 - ix) Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. At no time should the child's name be used with a photograph so that they can be identified. The school gives guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public school events – this is usually done through a public announcement or letter prior to the event. School staff should not take or keep photographs of children on their own personal cameras or mobile phones unless there is no alternative. If this happens the photographs should be deleted as soon as they are downloaded onto school equipment.
 - x) Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. 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. All personal information about children including social care records should be regarded as confidential. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed

on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school. The school would share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities.

- xi) All staff (whether teaching or support staff) are expected to adhere to the principle that school matters remain confidential out of and beyond school. Staff should avoid discussing school matters with anyone not directly involved, especially where that issue relates to individual pupils, parents, governors or staff or broader issues that have not yet become public knowledge.
- xii) Governors need to be mindful that from time-to-time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. Any papers should be marked as confidential and should be returned to the Clerk after the meeting and 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 a potentially contentious issue arises outside the Governing Body.

'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 with 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 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.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed as part of the school's monitoring cycle.

This Policy should also be read with the school's Safeguarding Policy and Data Protection Statement in accordance to the GDPR guidance.

September 2023
To be reviewed September 2024