

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1. Definition

1.1 The overall meaning of a confidentiality relationship is openness and agreement about what will happen to information disclosed between two, or more, people. It may not have to take the form of total secrecy. In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered. In most cases only limited confidentiality can be offered. The boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear at the beginning of the conversation.

2. Aims

2.1 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.

3. Objectives

3.1 For everyone (staff and governors, pupils and parents) to understand:

- The varying levels of confidentiality which might be offered in different circumstances;
- That no one can guarantee absolute confidentiality;
- When a breach of confidentiality may be justified.

4. Links

4.1 This confidentiality policy is linked to the school's PSHE, Drugs Education, RE and Safeguarding Children policies.

5. Guidelines

5.1 *Confidentiality and Pupils* - 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 maybe some potential difficulties in being supportive. You should adhere to the following policy:

- You must be clear to pupils that you cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when a pupil first begins to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue
- Pupils should be warned that if there is a child protection issue where the pupils, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, you are legally required to inform the school's designated teacher who may have to involve

other agencies. (Please refer to the school's Safeguarding Children Policy for further advice on this aspect.)

- School staff can only offer confidentiality to pupils on issues that do not involve significant illegal activities (e.g. drug trafficking, arson). If the conversation begins to move to this kind of issue, the pupil must be warned that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed
- In all cases where you feel that you have to break confidentiality with the pupil, you must inform the pupil and reassure them that their best interests will be maintained
- In talking with pupils, you need to encourage them to talk to their parents / carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate
- Pupils should be made aware of the specialist confidential services that maybe available in the school community e.g. school health nurse, doctor.

5.2 Confidentiality and Staff / Governors - 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.

5.3 Confidentiality and Families - 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. 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.

5.4 Confidentiality and Visitors - 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. All visitors will be briefed on the school Confidentiality Policy by the member of staff responsible for their work in school.

5.5 Practical issues - To ensure that this policy is properly implemented the following should be observed:

- Written information (whether electronic or on paper) of a confidential nature should be clearly marked as such. If such information is found in a non-secure location by any member of the school community it should be taken to the member of staff responsible for it or to the school office where it should be held securely.
- Care should be taken that confidential discussions cannot be overheard (e.g. doors and windows should be closed).
- Any issue of a significant personal nature should be treated as confidential and not a subject for open discussion.

- Members of staff and governors should request that open or otherwise inappropriate discussion of any matter that they consider to be of a confidential nature should cease and be taken through the proper channels.

6. Lines of Responsibility and Referral

6.1 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 Headteacher who is the designated Child Protection teacher. The person must make clear to the pupil that they will be passing on the information but that the information will remain confidential between them and the designated teacher. If confidentiality has to be broken, the child must be informed first.

6.2 A teacher does not have a general duty to inform the Headteacher 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, unless the Headteacher issues an instruction that they should be informed, in which case the teacher must comply.

7. Dissemination

7.1 This policy will be widely publicised to all the school community:

- Through the schools prospectus;
- Through school newsletters;
- Through staff induction;
- Through the school council;
- On the school Learning platform.

7.2 This policy will be discussed with staff as part of new staff induction and with all staff at least annually. A register of those involved in these discussions will be maintained as an Appendix to this policy (See Appendix A)

Status of this Policy: APPROVED

Date approved by Governing Body: 26 April 2010

Lead contributions from:

Staff: Flora Barton

Governors: Curriculum Committee

