



Confidentiality Policy

Member of staff Responsible: Headteacher

Date of Policy: Autumn 2017

Review Date: Autumn 2020 unless guidelines change or recommendations or evaluations demand an earlier review

Aims and Objectives

This policy provides guidance and information on confidentiality procedures in the school for staff, pupils, parents/carers and governors. To be accessible to all of these groups the document needs to be available on request and presented in a way that is easy to understand.

Moral and Values Framework

The Confidentiality Policy at Spixworth Infant School reflects the school ethos and demonstrates and encourages the following values:

- Respect for self;
- Respect for others;
- Responsibility for their own actions;
- Responsibility for their family, friends, schools and wider community.

Policy Statement

This school always operates in a way that respects every individual and family's right to privacy. All our staff and visitors are therefore expected to work within the guidelines of this policy which conform to recent legislation and government guidelines and which protect confidentiality.

In practice this means:

- making it clear that gossip is discouraged
- keeping personal records of behaviour confidential
- not discussing pupil or family personal matters in a general way
- using teaching methods which protect confidentiality
- always encouraging pupils to talk to their parents or carers about any anxieties they may have, while at the same time offering support for individuals and families from staff specialising in pastoral care.
- Care and due consideration is taken over decisions to break confidentiality.

Personal Disclosures

Pupils will be made aware that some information cannot be held confidentially and made to understand that if certain disclosures are made, certain actions will ensue. At the same time, pupils will be offered sensitive and appropriate support. The following procedures will be adhered to by all adults:

- Any staff who are concerned about disclosures by children at school, are to treat these as Safeguarding issues and all Safeguarding procedures need to be followed.
- If it is decided that certain information must be passed on to the Headteacher, then you are contractually obliged to do so
- Any action that is taken as a result of a disclosure will always have considered the best interests of the child first and foremost.
- We must never offer complete confidentiality. If we suspect anyone may be at risk from harm, we have to pass the information on.
- There are circumstances when parents/carers will be informed about their children by the class teacher. (health concerns, behaviour changes, accidents and injuries.)

If a child discloses information, we will:

- Discuss the information with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Contact the appropriate agencies as necessary
- There is no legal obligation to inform police of a parent/carer breaking the law.

- For a disclosure around health, pupils should be asked whether they can tell their parent(s) and whether they want help in doing so. If this takes place, subsequent responsibility then lies with the parent(s). It will need to be checked.
- If pupils refuse to tell their parent(s) the adult should refer them to a health professional. If confidentiality has to be broken at any time, pupils will be informed first and then supported as appropriate.
- Written records must be completed

When confidentiality is broken

When confidentiality has to be broken because someone may be at risk from harm:

- Children will be kept informed about *what* will be done with the information as is appropriate to their age and understanding.

Confidentiality in the classroom

All teaching will be done in a way that reaffirms respect for everyone in the school and associated with it. The following strategies for maintaining confidentiality in a class situation will be used in this school:

1. Setting ground rules

Teaching staff will work with pupils to develop ‘ground rules’ for lessons and discussions and show why these need to be agreed and respected by everybody. For example:

- no-one – teachers or pupils – will have to answer a personal question or disclose any personal details; explain that this is a basic way of protecting ourselves and is not negotiable
- everyone has the right to ‘pass’ on a question if they want to
- no-one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- everyone has the right to be listened to and have their views respected
- no teasing, jeering or bullying of any kind
- no sexual harassment will be tolerated
- if you don’t want anyone to know something either talk about it as though it was someone else or don’t bring it up.

2. Depersonalising

Teaching staff will protect pupils’ privacy in the class by always depersonalising discussions. Pupils can then explore the issues being raised without having their personal lives or those of their families implicated or invaded and ‘used’ inappropriately by other pupils. For example:

- use the ‘third person’ to allow pupils to keep a distance (‘If you were Jamie/Sara what would you do?’ rather than ‘What would you do?’)
- collect answers anonymously on pieces of paper so that pupils can express their feelings without risking exposure
- collect ‘group’ ideas without identifying individuals
- use sensitive role play to help pupils ‘act out’ situations and people they can identify within a ‘contained’ and safe way (always ‘de-role’ afterwards)
- provide appropriate videos and written scenarios with invented characters to encourage pupils to imagine how the people would feel, and discuss what they would do in their shoes
- organise planned visits with theatre in education groups – they provide a vehicle for probing sensitive issues, with actors expressing the emotions which pupils may be experiencing and answering questions ‘in role’

- making sure that pupils are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the NHS One Number, Child Line, a GP or local young person's advice services.

3. Other School Staff

Teaching Assistants, Classroom Assistants and Midday Supervisors must respect the confidentiality of children's disclosures. Any issues relating to the children must not be discussed with other people outside school. Discuss any concerns with the Teacher and they will discuss the issue with parents if necessary.

Other Professionals Working in School

Pupils may come in contact with a number of other professionals within the school, both those who work in the school and those visiting from outside. For example:

- School Health Advisers
- Therapists
- Outreach Workers
- Educational Psychologists

The involvement of these professionals raises a number of confidentiality issues:

Maintaining confidentiality in a classroom

Other professionals may need some support in working with groups in a way that protects confidentiality. In a one-to-one setting it is good practice for other professionals to talk to a pupil personally, to make sure that their concerns are identified, and that they understand the advice they are given. In a classroom setting it is not appropriate to talk directly to individuals about their personal experiences.

Professional Codes of Conduct

Whereas teachers are bound by their terms of contract and cannot promise students absolute confidentiality, other professionals – *when working with individual students* – are bound by their professional codes of conduct which tend to give students the right to confidentiality and it would be unreasonable to expect a professional to act outside his/her professional code within a school setting. Confidentiality, in these situations, should only be breached in exceptional cases and not without first informing the student.

In a classroom situation, including small group work, the school's policies and procedures apply to teachers and other professionals alike.

Data Protection

Confidentiality does not just relate to disclosures of information which could have legal implications such as abuse. Staff members should not handle *any* confidential information carelessly as pupils and other members of staff may regard this as the norm and respond in a similar manner if a confidence is passed to them.

The following measures are in place to ensure confidential information is dealt with appropriately:

- All staff are aware that they should not pass on any information about children or their parents/carers indiscriminately.
- Pupil records are kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- Offices are locked, whenever empty, if they contain pupil records or reports.

- Staff need to consider the suitability of the surroundings and the presence of other people when they have conversations with children, parents/carers, other members of staff that may need to be kept confidential.
- Talking about personal situations of staff, pupils and parents both inside and outside school is not appropriate.
- Information about children or families should only be taken off site in exceptional circumstances and always after seeking approval from the Headteacher
- No personal email accounts should ever be used for school related purposes
- All school staff have access to a private space where personal telephone calls can be made or taken.
- Any staff in breach of the above will be subject to disciplinary procedure

See Data Protection Policy for more detailed information.

Dissemination

- Parents/Carers are aware that provision can be made to speak confidentially to staff and the Headteacher if they request it.
- Parents/carers are aware that we can never offer complete confidentiality if we deem that someone is at risk from harm. The School Prospectus points this out. A copy is given to each parent when a child enters the school.
- All staff members, regular volunteers, students, governors and Friends committee members receive a copy of the policy. Training is regularly delivered to staff on the policy content.
- Other visitors, for example interview candidates, are made aware of the need for confidentiality and asked to report any concerns to the Headteacher
- Copies are available from the school website or school office on request from parents.