



Confidentiality Policy



Northumberland County Council

Submitted to staff Jan2018; ratified by Governors Spring 2018

Tritlington C of E Aided First School

Ethos

Reflecting the Trust Deed, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level.

The school will aim to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers all pupils.

These values include love, caring, sharing, forgiveness, tolerance, perseverance and goodwill to all people.

We aim to ensure everyone reaches their full potential by providing an education that stretches the mind, strengthens the body, enriches the imagination, nourishes the spirit, encourages the will to do good and opens the heart to others

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Confidentiality Policy

Rationale

Our school seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It is becoming increasingly important for schools to have a comprehensive confidentiality policy which gives clarity to parents, pupils, staff and visitors about levels of confidentiality that can be offered in different circumstances. Also the DfES Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (July 2000), the Drugs Guidance for schools (2004) and the National Healthy School Status – A Guide for Schools (August 2005) all advise that schools should have a clear, explicit confidentiality policy which should be well advertised to the school community.

- ❖ A clear explicit and well publicised confidentiality policy ensures good practice throughout the school which staff, (including staff from external agencies), parents and pupils can easily understand.
- ❖ The school needs to be clear about the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and responsibilities e.g. Child Protection procedures, PREVENT procedures.
- ❖ Different professionals can offer varying levels of confidentiality in different circumstances which can confuse staff and pupils.
- ❖ Sometimes parents and families may wish to disclose information confidentially to the school. Schools need to be clear about their position.

Tritlington 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.

Aims

- ❖ To ensure clear advice and guidance on the rules of confidentiality in the school for pupils, staff, parents/carers, and visitors.
- ❖ To encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems
- ❖ To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues
- ❖ To put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment.
- ❖ To seek to implement the underlying principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda and to address the issues which may arise about confidentiality.
- ❖ To protect the child at all times and to give all staff clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff.

Objectives

- ❖ To provide consistent messages in school regarding the handling of information about children once it has been received.
- ❖ To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
- ❖ To ensure that staff, governors, parents/carers 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 and disability provision.
- ❖ 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 school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Human Rights Act 1998

- ❖ Gives everyone the right to respect for his/her private and family life, his/her home and his/her correspondence, unless this is overridden: by the pupil interest, for reasons of child protection, for the protection of public safety, pupil order, health or morals or for the rights and freedoms of others.

Data Protection Act 1998

- ❖ Applies to personal data of living, identified viable individuals, not anonymised data; manual and electronic records. Schools need to be clear, when collecting personal data, what purposes it will be used for and schools should have policies to clarify this to staff, pupils and parents.
- ❖ Freedom of Information Act 2000
- ❖ Amends the Data Protection Act. Gives everyone the right to request any records a public body, including schools, holds about them. A school may withhold information it has if it is considered the information may damage the recipient, if disclosed. School data or record keeping policy should also cover the requirements of this act.

MORAL AND VALUES FRAMEWORK

- ❖ The moral and values framework within which confidentiality is addressed should be consistent with the overarching aims of the school and should be easily translated into practise in terms of:-
 - the curriculum content
 - the teaching methods
 - the relationships within the school

Guidelines

- ❖ Child protection procedures must be followed if any work with pupils and young people leads to a disclosure which makes you suspect that a child is a victim of abuse or is at risk of abuse or neglect.
- ❖ When visitors or health professionals are used to help deliver aspects of the curriculum, they should also follow the school's confidentiality policy. However, in a one-to-one situation with individual pupils they are bound by their own professional codes of conduct.
- ❖ Staff should not put pressure on pupils to disclose personal information and should discourage fellow pupils from applying any such pressure.
- ❖ In The Classroom: ground rules and distancing techniques will be used where sensitive issues are to be addressed. e.g. Drugs Education, Sex and Relationships Education.
- ❖ All adults should not put pressure on children to disclose personal information and should discourage others from applying any such pressure.
- ❖ All adults will remind children that some information they share in the classroom may need to be shared with other adults for their protection.
- ❖ Children will be reassured that, if information has to be shared, they will be informed first and then supported appropriately.
- ❖ If a child and his/her parent/ carer wish to highlight an issue to a peer group then this will be carried out sensitively by the class teacher/ head teacher. e.g., bereavement.
- ❖ 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 clear guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public school events.
- ❖ Information about children will be shared with parents 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 information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
- ❖ All social services, medical and personal information about a child will be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
- ❖ The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
 - The Headteacher is responsible for child protection and receives regular training.
 - There is clear guidance for procedures for the handling of child protection incidents. All staff have regular training on child protection issues.
 - There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of inappropriate conduct.
 - 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.

- Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
- Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and the schools discipline policy should be used.
- Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.

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.**

Communication

- ❖ The school prides itself on good communication with parents and carers. 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 will share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities.
- ❖ Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that only in exceptional circumstances is confidentiality broken.
- ❖ 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 are not identified.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher is the Designated Person for Child Protection.

- ❖ Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every three years by all staff and every two years by the Head teacher/Child Protection Lead
- ❖ Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other Personal, Health, Social and Economic (PHSE) session dealing with sensitive issues such as death etc.
- ❖ 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 necessarily 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.

- ❖ 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 the information but not on general view to other parents/carers and children.
- ❖ The school gives clear guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public events (see Use of Images Policy).
- ❖ All personal information about children including social services records will be regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by staff, who has access to what, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information. If unsure, check with the Headteacher first.
- ❖ Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reports, SEND minutes of meetings, 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 will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.

Governors Meetings

- ❖ Governors, in particular those sitting on discipline or complaints committees, will not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of the meeting.
- ❖ 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, children or parents/carers. Although decisions reached at governors meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be confidential.

DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

All staff members, governors and adults working in the school (including voluntary helpers) will be made aware of this policy. A copy is available to view at the school office upon request.

BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action(s).

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Child Protection Lead will monitor the effectiveness of the policy throughout the year in consultation with the governor with responsibility for child protection. The policy will be reviewed as part of the school's monitoring cycle.

Links to other policies:

PSHE Policy, Relationships and Sex Policy, Assessment and Marking Policy, Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Reporting of Racist Incidents, Drug Education & Incident Management Policy. The PSHE scheme of work, will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy in specified class or year groups.

Conclusion

Tritlington C of E Aided First 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.

Reviewed: Spring term 2018

