



Confidentiality Policy 2017 and 2018

Rationale

At Holy Cross C of E (VA) Primary school we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our pupils well-being and safety.
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school in order to minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- The school's attitude to confidentiality is easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality. Child protection and safeguarding concerns are always shared with relevant staff and appropriate outside agencies.

Definition of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'.

The confider is asking for the content of the conversation to be kept secret. Anyone offering absolute confidentiality to someone else would be offering to keep the content of his or her conversation completely secret and discuss it with no-one.

In practise, there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our school. We strive to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and good practise are followed. This means that in most cases, what is offered is limited confidentiality.

Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances. Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The pupil will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in the information sharing.

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances:

1. *In the classroom/in the course of a lesson given by a member of teaching staff or an outside visitor including health professionals.* Careful thought needs to be given to the content of the lesson setting the climate and establishing ground rules to ensure confidential disclosures are not made. It should be made clear to pupils that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential personal information. When a health professional is contributing to a school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

2. *One-to-one disclosures to members of school staff.* It is essential that all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer (to both pupils and parents/carers) and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the pupil or parent/carer, within the school and from other agencies where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage pupils to discuss different issues with their parents or carers and vice versa. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests. Any disclosure made should be reported to one of the safeguarding leads but should not be discussed with any other member of staff. If this information has to be shared with other staff this will be done by one of the safeguarding leads.

3. *Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in the school.* Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils provided they are competent to do so. School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a pupil's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

4. *All safeguarding and child protection information is stored securely and electronically.* Access to this information is restricted to and can only be accessed by senior staff and child protection leads.

The Legal Position for School Staff

A member of school staff should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents or carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this school's staff can, or should, give such a promise. The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

School staff members are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue. However, at Holy Cross C of E (VA) Primary school we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about pupils' safety and well-being.

Visitors and non-teaching staff

At Holy Cross C of E (VA) Primary School, we expect all non-teaching staff to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers of a concerning nature to the designated child protection co-ordinator as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot over-hear. The designated child protection co-ordinator will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

Parents/carers

Holy Cross C of E (VA) Primary school believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at school, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our pupils can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal issue, staff will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parents or carers and may be supported to do so where it is appropriate. The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

Dissemination and implementation

This policy has been distributed to all teaching and non-teaching staff. A copy of the policy can always be accessed through the availability of electronic and paper means. All new staff will receive a copy of the policy when they join the school during their induction process.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary.

Policy adopted: July 2017

Review date: July 2018