

Confidentiality Policy

Aim

To protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved 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.

Rationale

Whitchurch Combined School seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It 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.

Objectives:

1. To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
2. To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
3. To ensure that staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
4. To encourage children to be aware of confidentiality issues relating to their peers.
5. To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
6. To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
7. To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
8. To 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.

Guidelines

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
2. All social services, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
3. The school prides itself on good communication with parents and carers and staff are 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.
4. 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.
5. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PSHE session dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationships and drugs.
6. All children, parents, staff members and governors must enjoy privacy from gossip. All matters are dealt with according to the school's procedures and out of the eye of the wider community. It is important that:-
 - Staff do not discuss details of individual cases arising in staff meetings to any person without direct professional connection to and interest in the welfare and education of the individual concerned.
 - No member of staff discusses an individual child's behaviour in the presence of another child in school.
 - Staff maintain professional standards of confidentiality about anything seen or heard within the school.
 - Staff do not enter into detailed discussion about a child's behaviour with other children or their parents.
 - Governors, in particular those sitting on Discipline Committees, do not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of the meeting.
 - Parents in school, working as volunteers do not report cases of poor behaviour or pupil discipline to other parents in the school. This allows teachers to deal with such matters in line with school policy.
 - At full Governing Body meetings matters such as pupil exclusion, personnel issues and personal details of any member of the school community will be dealt with in the headteacher's Report under confidential. This is not for the knowledge of persons outside the Governing Body meeting. Minutes marked as confidential are minuted separately and minutes are not published.

- Staff performance management will be carried out privately. Targets for individuals, named lesson observation sheets and other performance data will be in the headteacher's office.
- Matters of Child Protection are made known to staff on a need to know basis.
- It is important that class teachers and support staff are aware of some confidential matters in order to support individuals. These staff will respect the sensitivity of such cases and not divulge information to people unconnected professionally with the individual concerned.
- When volunteers, such as parents and friends of the school are working in classes, they must not discuss educational matters outside the classroom. For example, the specific use of teaching assistant time for particular pupils or groups of pupils; teaching assistants have different roles within a class, including the support of children with special educational needs; the provision and work with these children is for the teacher to discuss with the relevant parents or carers.
- Volunteers, students and supply teachers are asked to read this policy before working in school.

Other Professionals

Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality when working in a one to one situation. When working in a classroom, they are bound by relevant school policies. In line with best practice guidance, like other school staff, they will seek to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate personal disclosures in a classroom setting, by negotiating ground rules and using distancing techniques.

7. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs. This information should be accessible to staff who need it but not on general view to other parents/carers and children.
8. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. This is often a cultural issue of which the school needs to be aware. At no time should the child's name be used with a photograph so that they can be identified.
9. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. However parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school.
10. All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by those who have access to it, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information.
 - Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEN reports, SEN minutes of meetings and 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 and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.
11. 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 collected 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 potentially contentious issues arises outside the governing body.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle.
2. The PHSE scheme of work, Sex and Relationship policy and Drug Policy will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy in specified year groups.
3. The Head teacher has responsibility for monitoring this policy.

Conclusion

Whitchurch Combined 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.

Dissemination of the Policy

Copies are available to view at the Headteacher's office upon request and a copy will be made available on the school web site.

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APPENDIX 1

SIX KEY POINTS ON INFORMATION SHARING

1. You should explain to children, young people and families at the outset, openly and honestly, what and how information will, or could be shared and why, and seek their agreement. The exception to this is where to do so would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or if it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.
2. You must always consider the safety and welfare of a child or young person when making decisions on whether to share information about them. Where there is concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration.
3. You should, where possible, respect the wishes of children, young people or families who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information, if in your judgement on the facts of the case, there is sufficient need to override that lack of consent.
4. You should seek advice where you are in doubt, especially where your doubt relates to a concern about possible significant harm to a child or serious harm to others.
5. You should ensure that the information you share is accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, shared only with those people who need to see it and shared securely.
6. You should always record the reasons for your decision – whether it is to share information or not.