



St. Mary's C.E. Infant School

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Definition

Confidential information means information which is not trivial, and not in the public domain. The dictionary definition is 'said or given in confidence, private, entrusted with another's secret affairs.' This policy must be considered alongside other School policies, in particular the School's policy on safeguarding children.

Aims

All members of staff, plus trainees and volunteers working under supervision on the School site should be clear about the level of confidentiality the School can expect of them.

Practice

It is expected that conversations about a child, or a family or observations about a child or family will not be discussed or repeated out of School. At St. Mary's Infant School we respect the dignity of each child and family. It is, however, often appropriate for staff to share concerns or observations about a child or family in a professional context when the information shared will help the care and education of the child. This is the only justification for information sharing. The overall meaning of a confidential relationship is openness and agreement about what will happen to information disclosed between two or more people. It may not take the form of total secrecy. There are few situations where absolute confidentiality can be offered. The boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear at the start or within conversations. Secrecy should never be promised to a parent or child. There may be occasions when a pupil is worried and will want to share information and may turn to teachers or other staff. In this case we accept that:

- Staff must ensure pupils are never offered unconditional confidentiality
- The Child Protection Co-ordinator should be warned if there are child protection issues
- When staff feel they need to break confidentiality with a pupil, the pupil must be told this
- Staff should always encourage children to talk about any concerns to parents/carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support them in doing this where appropriate.

For health and teaching professionals confidentiality has a professional or legal implication. For families it links more with trust and respect. Children and parents need to be informed of the boundaries of confidentiality as needs arise. The policy should be open and understood.

Potential Difficulties

Difficulties can arise when it appears that a teacher or staff member is breaking confidentiality by passing on information about a child or family to a senior member of staff, the Headteacher or possibly an outside agency. Usually there is a moral or professional duty to ensure that certain information is passed on when it is in the best interest of the child to do so. We recognise that there are family issues which may only be shared if they can be treated confidentially. The guidance remains the same: where possible, confidence will be respected except when it relates to the well-being of the child. Then the information will remain confidential on a need-to-know basis.

Professional Code of Conduct

In the School there may be a range of professionals from different agencies supporting children. These professionals when working on a one-to-one basis are bound by professional role of conduct. Parents need to be informed of the School's policy on confidentiality. Child protection issues are always paramount.

Staff Confidentiality

Staff also need to be clear about the professional responsibility to share staff information with the Headteacher where it is appropriate to the smooth running of the School, or where it could impact on the safety or care of children. There may also be pastoral reasons for the need to pass on information. This fact should normally be understood and communicated in discussions between staff.

Governors

Governors have a responsibility to be discrete with all information learnt about staff or children during their role within the School. They should not discuss incidents or information out of School and should pass on any concerns to the Headteacher or the Chair of the Governing Body.

All staff members and governors are required to sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of each academic year after reading this policy.