

Oak Hill C of E Primary School

Confidentiality Policy

This policy was written in consultation with staff and governors

Agreed by Governors: Oct 201
Review Date Oct 2020



Introduction

At Oak Hill C of E Primary we respect the right to privacy of children and their parents and carers, while ensuring that they access high quality school care and education. All staff, volunteers and visitors are expected to work within the guidelines of this policy which conform to recent legislation and government guidelines and which protect confidentiality. Care and consideration is taken over any decisions to break confidentiality.

Aims

We aim to ensure that all parents and carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

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.

Moral and Values Framework

The Confidentiality Policy at Oak Hill C of E Primary 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.

Methods

To ensure that all those using – and working in – the school can do so with confidence, we respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parents can request access to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects the child's welfare or planning for the child's needs.
- Any concerns/evidence relating to a child's personal safety are kept in a secure, confidential file and are shared with as few people as possible on a "need-to-know" basis.

- Personal information about children, families and staff is kept securely in a lockable file whilst remaining as accessible as possible.
- Students on training, when they are observing in the school, are advised of our confidentiality policy and required to respect it.

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the school, which is to the safety and well-being of the child. Please see also our policy on child protection.

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. Procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection and safeguarding policy will be adhered to by all adults upon the occasion of disclosure by a child or suspicion of possible abuse.

When confidentiality has to be broken due to possible risk from harm, pupils will be told when the information has been passed on and they will be kept informed about what will be done with that information. Pupils will also be told who the information is given to, in order to alleviate their fears about everyone knowing.

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:

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. These rules will make clear to pupils when it is and is not appropriate to discuss issues. Pupils will also be dissuaded from exerting pressure on anyone to answer personal questions.

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.

Teachers will make sure that pupils are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse, learning mentors, GP or local young person's advice services.

Classroom teachers and teaching Assistants must remain aware of their terms of contract and that they cannot promise children absolute confidentiality.

Other Professionals Working in School

Pupils may come in contact with a number of other professionals within the school. 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 child 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 pupils absolute confidentiality, other professionals – when working with individual students – are bound by their professional codes of conduct which tend to give pupils 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 child.

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

Other External Visitors

Pupils may come in contact with a number of other people within the school, this will include students, young people on work experience, parents and other volunteers. These external visitors are informed of the importance of confidentiality and our approach to this. They will be requested to read and sign a confidentiality form before helping in school.

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:

Pupil records are kept in a locked filing cabinet. Most pupil files are passed on to the child's next school or retained for 6 years and then destroyed.

Personal pupil information is not stored in the staffroom and is not displayed on notice boards, except for health and safety notices about specific children's allergy etc. reactions.

Discussing pupil, family or other staff members' personal matters in a general way is discouraged.

Equal Opportunities Statement

Our policy aims to respond to the diversity of children's cultures, faiths, gender, race and family backgrounds.