

Confidentiality Policy

Introduction

All schools are asked on occasions to keep information confidential. This can relate to a variety of issues including under age sexual activity, drugs use, abuse or other dangerous or illegal activities. It is important that the whole school follows the same clear and explicit policy. Pupils, parents and carers should be made aware of this and how it works in practice.

Associated Policies:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Thomas Keble policy documents:

- Freedom of Information
- Data Handling and Protection
- Safeguarding (Child Protection)
- Communications Policy
- Guidance for People Who Work with Children

Aims

- To give clear guidance to all members of the school around confidentiality.
- To encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems.
- To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues.

In lessons

- Ground rules and distancing techniques should be used where sensitive issues are to be addressed.
- Staff should not put pressure on pupils to disclose personal information and should discourage fellow pupils from applying any such pressure.

Personal disclosures

Disclosures from pupils may take place at an inappropriate place or time. If this happens, the member of staff should reassure the pupil and either talk again to the pupil before the end of the school day or refer to an appropriate senior member of staff. The member of staff may be able to discuss the issue with an appropriate colleague, to decide on suitable action.

Key Points

- Pupils should be reassured that their best interests will be maintained.
- Pupils should know that staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- Pupils should be reassured that, if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed and then supported appropriately.
- Pupils should be informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse, school counsellor, GP or local young person's advice service.
- Any personal information should be regarded as private and not passed on indiscriminately.
- If a member of staff receives information that leads them to believe that there is a child protection issue, they should refer the case to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding) or Headteacher as a matter of urgency.
- If a member of staff receives information that leads them to believe it might be relevant and significant to any aspect of school life, or to illegality or anti-social behaviour outside school, the Headteacher must be informed as a matter of urgency. Full details of protocols are contained in the school Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.

- Pupils should be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers and be given support to do so wherever possible.
- Government guidance requires professionals to consult as much as possible with parents about their children when referring to another agency. In general, parents should be consulted UNLESS THERE IS REASON TO THINK THAT OBTAINING SUCH CONSENT MAY PUT THE YOUNG PERSON AT RISK. If your referral is about child abuse (or the risk of it) rather than “children in need”, it is good practice to consult Social Services BEFORE discussing the issue with parents, unless a parent has asked you to make the referral and is already aware of it.
- All contact with social services should be made via the school safeguarding team. However, any member of staff can contact the Gloucestershire Children’s Help Desk if they feel a child is at risk. The contact number is: **01452 426565**. This reflects the school’s ethos that safeguarding and child protection is the responsibility of all staff.

Further Guidance

For all children, staff members and for Trustees to enjoy privacy from gossip, for the school to be fair to all its community, and for children and adults to have disciplinary matters dealt with according to the school’s own procedures and out of the eye of the wider school community, it is important that:

- Staff do not discuss details of individual cases arising in staff meetings or briefing, with 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 do not enter into detailed discussion about a child’s behaviour with other children or their parents.
- Trustees, in particular those sitting on Discipline or Personnel 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, or as part of the TK PTA, 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 Trust Board 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 as a confidential item. This is not for the knowledge of persons outside the Trust Board meeting. Confidential items 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 stored securely and electronically in a secure online system. Thomas Keble uses Bluesky for this purpose.
- Matters of Child Protection and other sensitive matters 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. In such cases, 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 do not discuss educational matters outside the classroom, for example, the specific use of TA time for particular pupils or groups of pupils. TAs 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.

Equal Opportunities

Staff may wish to discuss an individual case with a class or group. For instance, it can support the inclusion of a child with Aspergers Syndrome or Autism, if their peers are made aware of the condition and so have some ideas of what to expect. Similarly, a child with visual impairment can be supported if his/her friends know how to look out for them in the playground. In such cases permission will be sought from the child and his/her carers before any such action takes place.

Health 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.