



Sedgefield Primary School

Learning Together for Life

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Introduction

Sedgefield Primary School offers a caring, supportive environment where all children are valued. The understanding of the Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins all we do to develop the children's self-esteem, maturity, tolerance of others, caring attitude and the feeling of 'family' and belonging, which we feel are paramount to providing the best learning environment and in preparing our children to be productive and caring future global citizens. Without a firm foundation of supportive relationships and excellent communication between school, parent/carer and the child, a situation could arise which could have a negative impact on the child's education, health or behaviour. This could follow the child through into adulthood and affect their life within society.

All schools are asked, on occasions, to keep information confidential. This can relate to a variety of issues including family matters, drug use, abuse or other dangerous or illegal activities. Confidentiality is a whole school issue, therefore, it is important that all members of the school community follow the same clear and explicit policy. Children and parents/carers are made aware of this and how it works in practice.

Aims

- To maintain an ethos of trust and support within the school.
- To protect the child at all times.
- To encourage children to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems of any sort.
- To reassure the child that their best interests will be maintained and that the adult will do everything in their power to keep them out of danger and that this may involve outside agencies.
- To give clear guidance to all members of the school about confidentiality.
- To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues.
- To ensure that children and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.

- To ensure that children and parents/carers are reassured that, if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first and then supported appropriately.
- To ensure that if there are child protection issues, then the correct procedure is followed (see Safeguarding Policy).

1. Staff

- All information about individual children is private. However, 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.
- 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/carers.
- All Social Services and personal information about a child is held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
- The school has two senior members of staff as "Designated Teachers" (HT and Inclusion Co-ordinator) for child protection issues.
- Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every three years (see Safeguarding Policy).
- The school prides itself on good communication with parents/carers and staff are always available to talk to both children and parents/carers about issues that are causing concern.
- Staff understand that they can only offer confidentiality to children on issues that do not involve significant illegal activities e.g. stealing, drug dealing, arson etc. and, if they have to break confidentiality with the child, they must inform him/her (unless there is a good reason not to inform them e.g. risk of harm) and that they must reassure him/her that his/her best interests will be maintained.
- Staff will always encourage the child to talk to their parent/carer about the issue that may be troubling them (unless the issue is a child protection issue involving the parent/carer) and support in doing this will be offered where appropriate.
- 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 and electronic records will only be available from the Headteacher's computer.
- All staff can normally expect that their personal situations and health will remain confidential unless:
 - it impinges on their terms of contract or
 - endangers children or other members of staff or
 - there is a legal obligation to disclose such information or

- it is necessary for legal proceedings or
- despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or the wider public interest justifies disclosure.

In lessons

- Ground rules and distancing techniques (such as using case studies) are used where sensitive issues are to be addressed.
- Staff will not put pressure on children to disclose personal information and will discourage fellow children from applying any such pressure.

Personal disclosures

- If disclosures from children take place at an inappropriate place or time, the member of staff will try to talk to the child concerned privately before the end of the day.
- The member of staff may talk to an appropriate colleague, to decide on a suitable action, without giving the name of the child (unless it involves a Child Protection issue when the member of staff must consult a Designated Teacher).

2. Confidentiality and Pupils - Peers

- Children are encouraged to listen to their peers but it is made very clear that children are not allowed to promise to always keep secrets, but all conversations between children will be kept confidential, except in the following circumstances:

The 'friend' must tell an adult if a child discloses either any form of abuse, anything else that would make them worry about their safety or makes them feel uncomfortable.

- This particularly applies to Buddies and they are trained appropriately to deal with these potential situations and are supported by the Deputy Headteacher.

(See appendix 1 – confidentiality statement for pupils.)

Equal Opportunities

All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs.

However, with the very best interest of the child in mind, staff may need to discuss an individual case with a class or group. For instance it can support the inclusion of a child with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), specific/complex medical needs, sensory impairment or behavioural issues, if their peers are made aware of the condition and so have some idea of what to expect and what they can do to support the child. In such cases permission will always be sought from the child and his/her parent/carer.

3. Parents/Carers and Families

- We recognise that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a child and which the family will only disclose to us if they can be sure the information will be treated confidentially. We will respect the wishes of the family and, where it is felt necessary to share the information given to us, this will be discussed with the parent/carer first, unless a child is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child/protection /safeguarding concern.
- Information about children is shared with parents/carers, but only about their child. Parents/carers do not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time. However parents/carers are made aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school.
- Photographs of children are not used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet (consent forms held on file).

(See appendix 2 – confidentiality statement for parents/carers.)

4. Governors

- Governors do not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of appropriate meetings.
- At full Governing Body meetings/committee meetings matters such as pupil exclusion, personnel issues and personal details of any member of the school community are dealt with in the strictest confidence. This is not for the knowledge of persons outside the Governing Body meeting/committee meeting. Minutes will be amended so that confidential information is not published.

5. Students, Volunteers and Visitors

- When volunteers, such as parents and friends of the school are working in classes, they do not discuss educational matters, including behaviour issues, outside the classroom.

(See appendix 3 – confidentiality statement for students, volunteers and visitors and “Information for Parent Helpers and Volunteers”.)

6. Health Professionals

- Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with 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. Linked Policies

These are:

- Safeguarding
- Anti-bullying
- Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship (P.S.H.E. and Citizenship) including Sex & Relationships Policy)
- Health and Safety
- Care and Welfare
- Intimate Care
- Code of Conduct

8. Dissemination

This policy will be publicised to all in the school community through the following:

- Governors meetings
- Web site/School newsletters
- During induction of new staff/visitors/volunteers etc.
- Buddy Meetings
- By emphasising links to the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Appendix 1

Pupil Statement Concerning our Confidentiality Policy

We understand that there may be times when there are things which may be worrying you, but you feel that you can't talk about them with your family.

Teachers and other members of school staff will do all we can to help you, but you need to know the following:

- If you really want to talk to someone confidentially (without anyone else knowing what you have said) you can speak to any adult in school that you feel comfortable with.
- The teachers and other members of staff in school will often be able to help you with many of the things that may be worrying you, but they cannot promise to keep everything to themselves. If you tell them about things like stealing or bullying, they will have to speak to one of the senior teachers in the school, who might then have to speak to your parent/carer or the Police or Social Services.
- If the person to whom you are talking feels that they have to tell someone else what you have said, he/she will always tell you first and help you sort it out, perhaps helping you to speak to your parent/carer if you want this.
- Very rarely there are things which you talk about that can be very dangerous for you or for other young people e.g. someone trying to harm you. In this case the person you are talking to will have to tell someone else about what you have said, but they will tell you first and always help you to sort things out.
- If you talk to another child about your problem and they feel that you are in harms way, or they feel awkward or uneasy, they will tell you that you should talk to an adult, or they will talk to an adult for you.

Remember all the adults in school are there to help you in anyway they can. They will always want to keep you safe and happy.

Appendix 2

Statement for parents and carers concerning confidentiality and pupils.

There is increasing national concern for the emotional health and well-being of young people growing up in today's society. We recognise that parents/carers want to do all they can to support their child, but even in the most supportive of relationships, where there is excellent communication between parent/carer and child, there can be occasions when they are worried about something and feel that they cannot talk about it with you. This may result in enormous stress for the child, which can impact on their education, health and behaviour. Whilst we recognise that parents/carers will naturally be disappointed if their child does not choose to talk with you about what is troubling them, we feel there could be even more distress if the child is unable to cope with the issue themselves. On this basis we have agreed the following:

Our staff will be supportive to children who approach them with concerns, but will make it clear that they cannot offer confidentiality to the child on anything that involves an illegal activity, or anything that is a potential child protection issue where the child or others are likely to be at risk of significant harm.

Senior staff in the school will liaise with parents/carers as appropriate in case where a staff member has reported an issue over which they cannot offer confidentiality.

Staff will support children to inform their parents/carers about issues that are troubling them as appropriate.

Appendix 3

Statement for Students/Volunteers/Visitors

Teaching and Support Staff talk about their job constantly. Conversations at break and lunchtimes are often about school. We ask that such conversations are regarded as confidential.

Similarly, the work, progress or behaviour of individual children is a matter for the teacher, the child and the parents/carers of the child. Any comments made by students/volunteers/visitors about a child, or an incident at school may be misinterpreted and lead to misunderstandings. Small incidents are dealt with in school and should end there. More serious incidents will be discussed, in confidence, with parents/carers.

We feel sure you will understand the need for such confidentiality on school matters. As a student/volunteer/visitor in our school, we ask that you respect confidentiality on such matters to avoid misunderstandings and upset.

Thank you for your cooperation!