

# Courthouse Green Primary School



## Confidentiality Policy 2020-2023

## **Confidentiality Policy**

### **Introduction – why we need a confidentiality policy**

Our school recognises its legal duty under section 175 Education Act 2002 to work with other agencies in safeguarding children and protecting them from “*significant harm*”. The issue of confidentiality is significant as children have a right to expect schools to provide a safe and secure environment and are encouraged to share any concerns or worries they have with staff they trust. In order to maintain this trust and confidence, it is essential a child is informed of any need to disclose their information further, and possibly encouraged and supported to do this themselves. Pupils need to be assured their best interests will be maintained and understand staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality. Our school recognises that a confidentiality policy will support the school in safeguarding the needs of a child at all times.

Our school seeks to adopt an open and accepting attitude towards people of all ages within our community. We encourage parents and children to discuss any concerns or worries which may affect emotional health/well-being and educational progress; and to see the school as a safe place. Our Wraparound (before and after school care) also follow this policy.

### **Our aim**

- To highlight the importance of pupils being able to talk to adults in the school to share their problems in a safe and supportive environment.
- To build trust between pupils and staff and reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
- To provide opportunities for our pupils to access confidential support on school premises in the following ways: e.g. discussions with or notes shared in ‘worry box’ to the Learning Mentor, display support lines such as Childline, referral to school nurse/counsellor/etc
- To ensure the well being of those involved in the disclosure of confidential information is safeguarded
- To prevent the need to deal with each disclosure as a crisis in isolation.
- To foster an ethos of trust within the school, reflecting our core values of kindness and responsibility.

### **Our objectives**

In order to achieve our aims we will:

- Empower each pupil to exercise control over the choices that will affect their life.
- Encourage communication between pupils, staff, parents and other relevant parties to take place freely in an environment of mutual trust and respect.
- Enable confidential discussions to take place in a confidential environment. Public places such as the staff room, the classroom and the playground are not, in general confidential environments.
- Inform staff, pupils, parents/carers and partners about confidentiality, and its limitations in school. Some issues have to be shared with other people/agencies, e.g. child protection, and the differences in requirements of confidentiality between professionals should be recognised.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that ground rules are set for the protection of all.

**Contact number of Police - Main switchboard 08451135000**      **Contact number Social Care – 02476 788555**

### **Desired outcomes**

- Staff are trained in dealing with issues of confidentiality and feel confident doing so
- Pupils are aware of and understand how confidentiality works within the school
- Pupils feel they have control over their own lives and actions
- Communication between staff, pupils, parents and other members of the school community is successful and effective
- Pupils know who they can talk to and when situations are treated as confidential. They also recognise why some disclosures cannot be treated this way.
- Pupils can understand their own feelings and opinions and are confident expressing them.
- Pupils and staff know where they can access relevant support when they need it.
- Referrals to outside specialist services are made more easily and are appropriate to needs.

### **Management and co-ordination**

There is an identified member of the senior leadership team who oversees all aspects of confidentiality within school. Their role is to ensure:

- An effective structure to oversee the development, implementation, monitoring and review of this policy and to encourage a participatory approach to achieving the objectives
- Staff are aware that they are required to pass on confidential information in the circumstances of child protection
- Members of staff are aware of whom to inform in the event of different types of disclosures of a personal nature
- Parents/carers' and pupils right to view their own educational records upon written request is facilitated by the school (it is therefore not possible to guarantee the confidentiality of recorded information).

### **Staffing and staff development**

- Courthouse Green recognises that all staff, including support staff and lunchtime supervisors, are entitled to support and training relating to confidentiality. A range of provision will need to be identified that meets staff needs across a range of roles and responsibilities.
- Areas of staff expertise and individual staff development needs will be identified through existing staff development systems. This will be ascertained through (e.g. staff audit, performance management, etc)
- Staff will seek advice and support for themselves when dealing with a disclosure whilst keeping the individual's identity anonymous.

### **Partnerships**

Our school values working in partnership with parents/carers and with the wider school community and sees it as an essential part of promoting healthy lifestyles. The school prides itself on good communication with parents, carers, and staff and are always 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.

### **Responsibilities to parents/carers/pupils**

- Staff will encourage pupils to inform and seek support from their parents/carers.
- School will inform parents/carers following advice from Social Care if it is judged and identified to be in the best interests of the child.
- Any information recorded about a pupil will be logged on cpoms. Pupils will be advised (wherever possible prior to a disclosure) what kinds of disclosure will require information to be shared, what will be done with the information and who else will have access to it.
- Before sharing any disclosed information with parents/carers, schools need to either obtain the consent of the pupil or consider the possible consequences of sharing the information, taking into account knowledge of family circumstances. This will need to be done on a case-by-case basis.

### **Working with external agencies**

Anyone working with pupils from the school, particularly on sensitive areas of the curriculum, will be made aware of the school's confidentiality policy.

### **Recorded Information**

In reference to recorded information, agencies such as the Police and Children and Young People's Services may be able to get a court order to gain access to *processed* information, which the school deems confidential. This can also include the Local Authority's legal department and insurers, as well as other solicitors, e.g. in custody cases.

### **Data Protection**

All staff are familiar with the guidelines under the Data Protection Act. The following points support 'Confidentiality' and will be adhered to:

- Adults and children will be referred to by their initials in reports and/or e-mails.
- Discussion about identified children or staff should be with the appropriate professionals and in an appropriately private place.
- Discussion of sensitive information regarding staff, children and families (including general gossip) is unacceptable. If this guidance is not followed, it could be judged as a disciplinary matter.
- Class lists will not be available to parents/carers.

- Photographs of children used for media purposes will only be taken with the permission of parents and only have the child's first name.
- All recording of images will be done with the appropriate permission of parents and the class teacher will be responsible for checking this.
- For school performances/assemblies, a member of SLT will inform parents at the beginning of the performance whether they can or cannot take photos and/or videos.

### **Information Sharing Protocol (ISP)**

Courthouse Green School and its staff recognise the importance of information sharing and its vital role in enabling early intervention and preventative work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children and their families, but also aware of the need to treat information confidentiality. The following guidelines/questions support when confidential information should be shared:

- If there is a clear and legitimate purpose to share information
- If confidential information has consent to share
- If consent is refused, or good reasons not to seek consent to share confidential information and a child and/or family is considered to be at risk of significant harm
- If information shared is done appropriately and securely.
- Is the information confidential?
- Does the information enable a living person to be identified?

Courthouse Green School has a duty of care and responsibility towards pupils, parents/carers and staff. It also needs to work with a wide range of agencies and share information on a professional basis. The care and safety of the individual is the key. Further guidance can be found on the 'Flowchart of key questions for information sharing' Appendix 2.

**Date of policy:** December 2020

**Date of next Review:** December 2023

