



St Hugh's School

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.

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 talk again individually to the pupil before the end of the school day. The member of staff may be able to discuss the issue with an appropriate colleague, to decide on suitable action, without giving the name of the pupil.

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 first and then supported appropriately
- Pupils should be informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse, counsellor, GP or local young person's advice service
- Any personal information should be regarded as private and not passed on indiscriminately (for example in the staff room)
- If a member of staff receives information that leads them to believe that there is a child protection issue, they should discuss with the young person the need to refer the case to a designated safeguarding lead
- Pupils should be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers and be given support to do so where ever 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 asked if they wish to be referred, **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.

Further Guidance

For all children, staff members and governors 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 to 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.
- Governors, in particular those sitting on Discipline 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 Parents and Friends Association, 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 Governing body meetings matters such as pupil exclusion, personnel issues and personal details of any member of the school community will be dealt with in the head teacher's Report under Part B confidential. This is not for the knowledge of persons outside the Governing body meeting. Minutes in Part B are minuted separately and minutes are not published. Where details could influence disciplinary procedures or prejudice pupil exclusion or staff dismissal outcomes they should not be included in the head teachers report.
- Performance management and other staffing issues will be carried out privately. Targets for individuals, named lesson observation sheets and other performance data will be in the head teacher's office and electronic records will only be available from the head teacher's computer.
- Matters of Child Protection are made known to staff on a need to know basis in line with the child protection policy.
- 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.
- 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 teaching assistant time for particular pupils or groups of pupils, teaching assistants 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 idea 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.

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.

Breach of Policy

Breaches of this policy will be handled using relevant complaints or disciplinary procedures.