



## Otterbourne Church of England Primary School

Trust, Respect and Determination

### Confidentiality Policy

Name / Signature of Headteacher:	Martin Geraghty
Name / Signature of Chair of Governors:	Sue Barham
Date Policy approved and adopted:	November 2024
Date Due for review:	January 2026

### VERSION CONTROL LOG

Date	Description of changes (person responsible)
26/11/24	Policy updated and renewal cycle changed
16/01/23	Headteacher name changed. Review date changed. Included references to Code of Conduct and Low-Level Concerns Policy.

This policy is intended to ensure that all members of the school community are aware of and are clear about the levels of confidentiality they offer to others and can expect themselves. We respect and value the individuals who work and learn at our school based on our Christian Values. We wish for all persons to be treated appropriately, with sensitivity and with the care and safety of the individual a priority.

Our Confidentiality Policy will enhance children's learning and personal development through: -

- Taking the appropriate action to safeguard and protect children.
- Consistency in the handling of information about children from our staff, visitors and other professionals.
- The fostering of an ethos of trust and respect.
- Equality of provision and access for all. It is becoming increasingly important for schools to have a comprehensive confidentiality policy which gives clarity to parents/carers (collectively known as Parents hereafter), pupils and staff about levels of confidentiality that can be offered in different circumstances.

This policy is designed to create protection for all in the community and also to benefit all members of the school. A clear, explicit and well-publicised confidentiality policy ensures good practice throughout the school, which staff, governors, parents and pupils can easily understand.

Sometimes, parents and families may wish to disclose information confidentially to the school and we need to be clear about our position in different circumstances. Our aim is that all members of staff working at the school site are clear about the levels of confidentiality that they can offer to the school community and can expect for themselves.

### **The Principles**

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 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 and child, there can be occasions when the child is worried about something and feels unable to talk about it with parents. This may result in enormous stress for the pupil which can impact on their education, health and behaviour, potentially leading to self-harm and even suicide in the most extreme cases. Whilst we recognise that parents will naturally be disappointed if their child does not choose to talk with them about what is troubling them, we feel there could be even more distress if the pupil is unable to cope with the issue themselves. On this basis we have agreed the following:

- Our staff will be supportive to pupils who approach them with concerns, but will make it clear that they cannot offer confidentiality to the pupil on anything that involves an illegal activity or anything that is a potential child protection/ safeguarding issue where the pupil or others are likely to be at risk of significant harm.
- The Headteacher, or the most senior member of staff (DSLs) will liaise with parents as appropriate, or with Children's Services, in cases where a staff member has reported an issue over which they cannot offer confidentiality.
- Staff will support pupils to inform their parents about issues that are troubling them as appropriate.
- We will make pupils aware of specialist confidential services in the community where they can seek assistance if they wish.
- When adults disclose confidential information, the same principles will apply

### **Confidentiality of Pupil Information**

Any discussions with pupils should be of a professional nature and should only be held in areas of the school where confidentiality and privacy can be guaranteed. Corridors or open spaces where parents or other pupils may hear confidential information are not appropriate at most points of the day. External visitors and students occasionally use the staff room; permanent members of staff should consider this before embarking on any discussion about pupils. In some circumstances, certain members of staff, such as those who work closely with a particular pupil, will be made aware of confidential details from external agencies. This information must not be shared with any other member of staff, due to the sensitivity of some situations. Some information, when appropriate, will be passed on to a receiving teacher, for example: when a pupil moves from one class to another.

### **Procedures for Staff, Pupils, Governors, Volunteers and Families**

If children or adults share information with you it is important that you are helpful and provide a listening ear, however there are certain clear guidelines to which you must adhere, which are also

detailed in the school's Code of Conduct. The following procedures will describe the majority of circumstances or forms of information that you are likely to encounter; they do not follow in process order and will not all be appropriate in each situation.

- Staff should be aware of professional boundaries. Distancing techniques should be used when appropriate and children encouraged or supported to access the confidential services available within the School, Local Authority and Nationally.
- Staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality and must make this clear to children when they begin to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue.
- In order to protect themselves, all staff must be mindful of the need for open and transparent conversations with pupils. Always ensure discussions with pupils are held in rooms where other members of staff can see you. Ensure, where possible, that the conversation can remain confidential to the pupil without compromising transparency, for example: leave a door slightly open, and ensure you are in a room with a glass window section.
- You must be clear to pupils or adults that you cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when they first begin to talk. This must be made explicit, especially during SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) lessons, where children may choose to discuss confidential matters.
- Pupils should be warned that if there is a child protection/safeguarding issue where the pupils, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, you are under a duty to inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL/DDSL) who may have to involve other agencies. It is important that each member of staff deals with this sensitively and explains to the pupil that they must inform the appropriate people who can help the child, but that they will only tell those who need to know in order to help.
- School staff can only offer confidentiality to pupils on issues that do not involve illegal activities e.g. drug trafficking, arson, etc. If the conversation begins to move to this kind of issue, the pupil must be warned that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- In all cases where staff feel that they may have to break confidentiality with the pupil, the staff member must inform the pupil, and reassure them that their best interests will be maintained.
- In talking with pupils, a staff member may need to encourage them to talk to their parents about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate.
- Pupils should be made aware of the specialist confidential services that may be available in the school and the community e.g. Child Line, a School Nurse, doctor or young people's drop-in service. (The requirement to offer a confidential service is within the professional Code of Practice for school nurses and other health service staff.)
- We recognise that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a pupil 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 parents first unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection/safeguarding concern.
- Personal, medical, Special Educational Needs (SEN) and children's services information about children should be held in a secure location.

- Volunteers are advised to follow the procedures above, but share immediately with the class teacher should a child choose to share information relating to a worry or concern. We do not believe that there are any matters of confidentiality affecting children with SEN which are not covered in the procedures above.

### **Health Professionals (School Nurse Team)**

Health services can offer confidential health services to pupils under the age of 16, providing they follow the Fraser Guidelines which require:

- The young person understands the advice and has sufficient maturity to appreciate what is involved in terms of moral, legal, social and emotional implications for themselves.
- They cannot be persuaded to tell their parent, or allow them to be informed.
- The young person's physical or mental health is likely to suffer unless they receive advice or treatment.
- It is in the young person's best interests to give advice or treatment.

The requirement to offer a confidential service is within the professional code of practice for school nurses and other health staff. Health professionals must also inform appropriate services if they become aware of a child protection issue in discussions with a young person.

### **Parents and Families**

We will respect the wishes of a family who want share confidential information about their personal or child's circumstances. We will let them know if we feel it is important to share this information with other people and who it will be shared with. Parents are not consulted if it is felt that the child is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection concern.

### **Staff and Governors**

All staff and governors can normally expect that their personal situations and health issues will remain confidential unless:

- It impinges upon their terms of contract.
- It endangers children or other members of staff.
- There is a legal obligation to disclose such information.
- It is necessary for legal proceedings.
- Despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or wider public interest justifies disclosure.

Staff should also expect that their reporting of low-level concerns, which is detailed in the school's Low Level Concerns policy, will be treated with confidentiality.

### **STATEMENT FOR CHILDREN CONCERNING CONFIDENTIALITY**

We want you to know that there will always be an adult in school who is available to listen to you and hear any concerns you may have. There are times when you may have worries but you feel you can't talk about them with your family. Everyone at school will try and do all they can to help you but you need to know these things:

- Adults at school can help you with many of the things that may be worrying you but they cannot promise to keep everything to themselves. Sometimes, if it is really serious, they

will have to let Mr Geraghty know who might then have to speak to your parent, the police or Children's Services.

- If you really want to talk to somebody without anybody else knowing what you have said, let us know and we might be able to find someone else outside of school if you think this would be better for you.
- If the adult you speak to feels that they have to tell someone else what you've talked about, they will always tell you first and help you sort it out, perhaps helping you to speak to your parent if you want this. Sometimes, these people may have to tell someone else what you have said but they will tell you first and always try to help you sort things out.