



# THE BISHOPSWOOD SCHOOLS FEDERATION

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

### **Aim**

In order for the Bishopswood Schools Federation to value each child as an individual and encourage them to reach their full potential we aim to ensure that this confidentiality policy is embedded in the every day life of our school. The aim of this policy is to protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the schools which is understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff.

### **Objectives:**

1. To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
2. To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
3. To ensure that staff, parents/carers and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
4. To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained
5. To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
6. To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
7. To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all including rigorous monitoring of cultural, gender and special educational needs.
8. To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.
9. To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
10. To understand that health professionals are bound by a different code of conduct.
11. To ensure that parents/carers have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

### **Guidelines:**

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff who have a need to know (This will be decided by the Executive Headteacher).
2. All social services, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.

3. The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
  - a. The school has appointed a number of senior leaders who complete DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) training every two years.
  - b. There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents. All staff have regular training on child protection issues.
  - c. There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse.
  - d. Staff are aware that effective sex and relationship education, which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue.
  - e. Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
  - f. Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and should be dealt with in accordance with the school's capability policy.
  - g. Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.
4. Government guidance requires professionals to consult as much as possible with parents/carers about their children when referring to another agency. In general, parents/carers should be asked if they wish to be referred, UNLESS THERE IS REASON TO THINK THAT OBTAINING SUCH CONSENT MAY PUT THE CHILD 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 Children's Services BEFORE discussing the issue with the parents/carers, unless a parent/carer has asked you to make the referral and is already aware of it.
5. 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. The school encourages children to talk to parents/carers about issues causing them concern and may in some cases support the children talking to their parents.
6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that other than in exceptional circumstances confidentiality will not be broken.
7. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs. A lot of data is generated in schools by these categories but individual children should not be able to be identified.
8. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PSHE sessions dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationships and drugs.
9. Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should be accessible to staff who need that information but not on general view to other parents/carers and children.
10. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. This is often a cultural issue that the school needs to be aware of. At no time should the child's name be used with a photograph so that they can be identified. The school gives clear guidance to parents/carers about the use of cameras and videos during public school events.

11. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. However parents/carers should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school. Information which is not needed by the receiving school will be retained in school for the county recommended length of time and will be shredded thereafter. All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by those who have access to it, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEN reports, SEN minutes of meetings and social services minutes of meetings and reports will be circulated in envelopes and once read should be returned for secure filing. Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure and each child should have their own individual log. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.
12. Governors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents/carers. Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential. Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arise outside of the governing body.
13. Parents/carers in school, working as volunteers, or as part of the Parent, Teacher Association (PTA), should not discuss anything seen or heard, in relation to individual children, parents/carers or staff, in school with other parents/carers. Parents/carers working in school with individual or groups of children will be subject to CRB checks in accordance with our Volunteer Policy.

### **Conclusion**

The Bishopswood Schools Federation has a duty of care and responsibility towards pupils, parents/carers and staff. It also needs to work with a range of outside agencies and share information on a professional basis. The care and safety of the individual is the key issue behind this document.

**Policy Reviewed** – November 2021

**Next Review** – November 2023