

OAKLEY INFANT SCHOOL

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1. Introduction

The Staff and Governors at Oakley Infant School are conscious that a clear, explicit and well publicised confidentiality policy ensures good practice throughout the school which staff (including those from external agencies) parents/carers and pupils can easily understand. The policy should confirm that all members of the school community are clear about the levels of confidentiality that they can offer to other members of the community and expect themselves.

The policy was developed through discussion by the whole staff team and members of the Governing Body during a whole school training session.

2. Aims

We aim to:

- be transparent about the process for developing and reviewing this policy.
- for everyone to understand the varying levels of confidentiality which might be offered in different circumstances.

3. Policy into Practice

- The school needs to be clear about the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and responsibilities e.g. Child Protection/ safeguarding procedures.
- Different professionals can offer varying levels of confidentiality in different circumstances which can confuse staff and pupils.
- Sometimes parents/carers and families may wish to disclose information confidentially to the school. Schools need to be clear about their position.

The policy has been developed with reference to the documents encouraging the development of confidentiality policies. These include:

- *What to do if you are worried a child is being abused* Department of Health (Ref 31553/"What to do if you're worried a child is being abused")
- *Guidance to schools on Sex and Relationships Education* Department for Education and Skills (Ref DfES 0116/2000)
- *National Healthy School Status- A Guide for Schools* www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk August 2005
- *Protocol for sharing information about children and young people* (Hampshire Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership, February, 2005)
- *Information Sharing: Practitioners' guide* (DfES 2006)
- *Information sharing: Case examples* (DfES 2006)
- *Information sharing: Further Guidance on Legal issues* (DfES 2006)

4. Where and to whom the policy applies.

The policy applies to:

- All teaching and non-teaching members of staff working in the school.
- Governors
- Visiting staff from external agencies
- Parents and other volunteers working in school

5. Staff support and training

Training and support will be offered to all staff in the school through

- Staff induction
- Training offered by Hampshire Children's services
- School based INSET sessions

Governors through Governor induction.

Parents through Parent leaflet.

6. POLICY

All school staff members

We recognise that there are occasions when pupils are worried about something and feel that they cannot talk about it to their parents/carers. This can result in enormous stress for the individual which impacts on their education and health. Some pupils may feel that they can turn to teachers and other staff members for support and we want to be as helpful as we can whilst recognising that there may be some potential difficulties in being supportive. You should adhere to the following policy:

- When talking with pupils, it is important for you to be aware of maintaining your professional boundaries. Whilst being supportive where you can, distancing techniques should be used when appropriate and pupils encouraged or supported to access the confidential services offered on the school site.
- **You must be clear to pupils that you cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when a pupil first begins to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue.**
- Pupils should be warned that if there is a child protection/ safeguarding issue where the pupil, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, **you are under a duty to inform the school's Child Protection/ Safeguarding Liaison Officer who may have to involve other agencies.** (Please refer to the school's child protection/ safeguarding procedures for further advice on this aspect). 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.
- In all cases where you feel that you have to break confidentiality with the pupil, you must inform the pupil, (unless there is a good reason not to inform them e.g. risk of harm) and reassure them that their best interests will be maintained.
- In talking with pupils, you need to encourage them to talk to their parents/carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate.
- **The school ELSA**

The school has an ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) who as a result of her work with pupils can become involved in a confidential discussion. The ELSA cannot offer confidentiality over a child protection issue but sometimes it is helpful for a pupil to be able to talk about troubling issues in order to help the pupil through their situation. We do not require our ELSA to inform staff about conversations unless there is a child protection issue or other significant risk.

The school nurse:

The requirement to offer a confidential service is within the professional Code of Practice for school nurses and other health service staff. The government has also signed up to international legislation and charters which entitle young people to access health services. However, health professionals like everyone else, must inform appropriate services if they become aware of a child protection/ safeguarding issue in discussions with a young person.

Parents/carers and Families

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/carers first unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection/ safeguarding concern.

Staff and Governors

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

- it impinges on their terms of contract or
- endangers pupils 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.

Linked Policies

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the policies on

- Child Protection
- PSHE Policy including appendices on Sex and Relationships and Drugs education
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Racial Awareness Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Behaviour management Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Dissemination

This policy will be widely publicised to all in the school community

- through the school prospectus
- with job details to applicants
- through posters and leaflets or agreements with other agencies working on the school site,
- through assemblies and the school council
- on the school website

- by emphasising links to the to the school's anti-bullying policy and child protection/ safeguarding policy and procedures.

The policy will be written in such a way as to be accessible to pupils, teachers, parents/carers and the wider community.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

It is the responsibility of the *Governing Body* to monitor the effectiveness of the Confidentiality Policy through the school Self Evaluation procedures.

Reviewed and updated by Resources Committee

Mar 2007

Review date

Mar 2009

APPENDIX 1:**A sample 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 and 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 pupil which can impact on their education, health and behaviour, unfortunately self-harm and even suicide in the most extreme cases. Whilst we recognise that parents and 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 pupil is unable to cope with the issue themselves. On this basis we have agreed the following:

School staff (with the exception of the school nurse and school ELSA)

- 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.
- Senior staff in the school will liaise with parents/carers as appropriate in cases where a staff member has reported an issue over which they cannot offer confidentiality.
- Staff will support pupils to inform their parents/carers about issues that are troubling them as appropriate.

School ELSA

The school has an ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) who as a result of her work with pupils can become involved in a confidential discussion. The ELSA cannot offer confidentiality over a child protection issue but sometimes it is helpful for a pupil to be able to talk about troubling issues in order to help the pupil through their situation. We do not require our ELSA to inform staff about conversations unless there is a child protection issue or other significant risk.

School nurse:

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APPENDIX 2:

A sample statement for pupils concerning confidentiality.

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, (this means without anyone else knowing what you have said), you can speak to any member of the staff .
- The teachers and other members of staff in the 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 some serious things like stealing, they will have to speak to one of the senior teachers in the school who might then have to speak to your parents or the police.
- If the staff member feels that they have to tell someone else what you have talked about, they will normally tell you first and help you sort it out, perhaps helping you to speak to your parents 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 like someone trying to harm you. Then the staff may have to tell someone else about what you have said, but they will normally tell you first and always help you to sort things out.