



# **Rowlands Gill Primary School**

## **Confidentiality Policy**

**Date: January 2017**

**Ratified by Governors: January 2017**

**Review Date: January 2018**



## **1. Aim**

To ensure clear advice and guidance on the rules of confidentiality in the school for pupils, staff, parents/carers and visitors.

To encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems.

To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues.

To put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment.

To seek to implement the underlying principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda and to address the issues which may arise about confidentiality.

## **2. Rationale**

*Why are you writing this policy?*

It is becoming increasingly important for schools to have a comprehensive confidentiality policy which gives clarity to parents, pupils, staff and visitors about levels of confidentiality that can be offered in different circumstances. Also the DfES Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (July 2000), the Drugs Guidance for Schools (2004) and the National Healthy School Status – A Guide for Schools (August 2005) all advise that schools should have a clear, explicit confidentiality policy which should be well advertised to the school community.

You may wish to include some of the following reasons or develop your own:

A clear explicit and well publicised confidentiality policy ensures good practice throughout the school which staff, (including staff from external agencies), parents and pupils can easily understand.

The school needs to be clear about the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and responsibilities e.g. Child Protection procedures.

Different professionals can offer varying levels of confidentiality in different circumstances which can confuse staff and pupils.

Sometimes parents and families may wish to disclose information confidentially to the school. Schools need to be clear about their position.

### **3. Objectives**

To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.

To foster an ethos of trust within the school.

To ensure that staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.

To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.

To encourage pupils to talk to their parents and carers.

To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.

To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all including rigorous monitoring of cultural, gender and special educational needs.

To ensure that if there is a child protection issue then the correct procedure is followed.

To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.

To understand that health professionals are bound by different codes of conduct.

To ensure that parents 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.

Pupils should be made aware of the specialist confidential services that may be available on the school site or in the school community e.g. school nurse, counsellor, Connexions personal adviser, doctor or young people's drop-in service.

Pupils should be reassured that, if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first and then supported appropriately.

### **4. Guidelines**

How will the objectives be met?

Our policy will ensure that:

Child Protection procedures are followed if any work with young people leads to a disclosure which makes you suspect that a child is a victim of abuse or is at risk of abuse or neglect.

All information about individual children is private and will only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.

All social services, medical and personal information about a child will be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than key members of staff.

When visitors or health professionals are used to help deliver aspects of the curriculum, they will also follow the school's confidentiality policy. However, in a one-to-one situation with individual pupils they are bound by their own professional codes of conduct.

Confidentiality is a whole school issue and staff will be given training etc on an annual basis.

Ground rules and distancing techniques should be used where sensitive issues are to be addressed.

Staff will not put pressure on pupils to disclose personal information and will discourage fellow pupils from applying any such pressure.

The school prides itself on good communication with parents and 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 to talk to their parents. The school will share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities.

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 will not be able to be identified.

Photographs of children will not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. 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 about the use of cameras and videos during public school events.

Information about children will be shared with parents only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time especially at parents' evening. However parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school.

Business in Governors' meetings relating to individual pupils or staff should be confidential at all times.

## **5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Head Teacher will monitor any confidential issues. Any issues which need addressing will be dealt with as soon as possible and the staff/governor informed of any immediate training need.

## **6. Conclusion**

We have 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.

## **7. Appendix**

See

- (i) Setting ground rules
- (ii) Depersonalising
- (iii) Other professionals working in schools
- (iv) Personal Disclosure

Reviewed: - January 2017

Next Review: January 2018

Signed ..... Head Teacher

Signed ..... Chair of Governors

Date .....

### **(i) Setting Ground Rules**

Teaching staff will work with pupils to develop 'ground rules' for lessons and discussions and show why these need to be agreed and respected by everybody. For example:

- no-one-teachers or pupils – will have to answer a personal question or disclose any personal details, explain that this is a basic way of protecting ourselves and it is not negotiable.
- Everyone has the right to 'pass' on a question if they want to
- No-one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- Everyone has the right to be listened to and have their views respected
- No teasing, jeering or bullying of any kind
- No sexual harassment will be tolerated
- If you don't want anyone to know something either talk about it as though it was someone else or don't bring it up

### **(ii) Depersonalising**

Teaching staff will protect pupils' privacy in the class by always depersonalising discussions. Pupils can then explore the issues being raised without having their personal lives or those of their families implicated or invaded and 'used' inappropriately by other pupils. For example:

- use the 'third person' to allow pupils to keep a distance ('If you were Jamie/Sara what would you do?' rather than 'What would you do?')
- collect answers anonymously on pieces of paper so that pupils can express their feelings without risking exposure
- collect 'group' ideas without identifying individuals
- use sensitive role play to help pupils 'act out' situations and people they can identify within a 'contained' and safe way (always 'de-role' afterwards).
- provide appropriate videos and written scenarios with invented characters to encourage pupils to imagine how the people would feel, and discuss what they would do in their shoes.
- organise planned visits with theatre in education groups – they provide a vehicle for probing sensitive issues, with actors expressing the emotions which pupils may be experiencing and answering questions 'in role'
- making sure that pupils are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school health adviser, school based services, school counsellor, GP or local young person's advice services.

### **(iii) Other Professionals Working in School**

Students may come in contact with a number of other professionals within the school, both those who work in the school and those visiting from outside. For example:

- Connections Pas
- School Health Advisers

- Youth Workers
- T2 Specialist Drug Workers
- Outreach Workers

The involvement of these professionals raises a number of confidentiality issues:

- using teaching methods which protect confidentiality
- always encouraging pupils to talk to their parents or carers about any anxieties they may have, while at the same time offering support for individuals and families from staff specialising in pastoral care.

However, on a few occasions, in spite of this approach, some young people may, for various reasons, at first feel unable to involve their parents. Over the years the school has found that under these circumstances parents feel it is important for the health and safety of their children that there should be a trusted adult to whom they can turn for early help before the situation gets possibly worse. The school therefore has in place a system whereby staff can offer children help in a limited 'confidential' way. This could involve referring a child to a health professional without informing his or her parents.

Other related policies and documents include the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) Policy, PSHE Policy, Citizenship Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Drug Education Policy, Child Protection Policy and the Promoting Race Equality document.

#### **(iv) Personal Disclosures**

Pupils will be made aware that some information cannot be held confidentially and made to understand that if certain disclosures are made, certain actions will ensure. At the same time, pupils will be offered sensitive and appropriate support. The following procedures will be adhered to by all adults:

1. Disclosures or suspicion of possible abuse – the school's child protection procedures will be invoked (see relevant policy.)
2. Disclosures of all types of sensitive emotional issues – it is hoped that the following Procedure will ensure that pupils who are in difficulty know that they can talk to an adult in the school and that they will be supported. Professional information and guidance will always be sought from a health professional. The school will always encourage pupils to talk to parents first:
  - Pupils should be asked whether they can tell their parent(s) and whether they want help in doing so. If this takes place, subsequent responsibility then lies with the parent(s). It will need to be checked.
  - If pupils refuse to tell their parent(s) the adult should refer them to a health professional. If confidentiality has to be broken at any time, pupils will be informed first and then supported as appropriate.
  - The adult should record and file the incident confidentially in school.