

Courthouse Green Primary School



Confidentiality Policy 2017-2020

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Confidentiality Policy

Introduction – why we need a confidentiality policy

Our school recognises its legal duty under section 175 Education Act 2002 to work with other agencies in safeguarding children and protecting them from “*significant harm*”. The issue of confidentiality is significant here as children have a right to expect schools to provide a safe and secure environment and are encouraged to share any concerns or worries they have with staff they trust. In order to maintain this trust and confidence, it is essential a child is informed of any need to disclose their information further, and possibly encouraged and supported to do this themselves. Pupils need to be assured their best interests will be maintained and understand staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.

Our school recognises that a clear confidentiality policy will support the school in meeting the Every Child Matters outcomes of “be healthy” and “stay safe”.

Our school seeks to adopt an open and accepting attitude towards people of all ages within our community. We encourage parents and children to discuss any concerns or worries which may affect emotional health/well-being and educational progress; and to see the school as a safe place. Our Wraparound (before and after school care) also follow this policy.

Our aim

- To highlight the importance of pupils being able to talk to adults in the school to share their problems in a safe and supportive environment.
- To build trust between pupils and staff.
- To provide opportunities for our pupils to access confidential support on school premises in the following ways: e.g. discussions with or notes shared in ‘worry box’ to the Learning Mentor, display support lines such as Childline, referral to school nurse/counsellor/etc
- To ensure the well being of those involved in the disclosure of confidential information is safeguarded
- To prevent the need to deal with each disclosure as a crisis in isolation.

Our objectives

In order to achieve our aims we will:

- Empower each pupil to exercise control over the choices that will affect their life.
- Encourage communication between pupils, staff, parents and other relevant parties to take place freely in an environment of mutual trust and respect.
- Enable confidential discussions to take place in a confidential environment. Public places such as the staff room, the classroom and the playground are not, in general confidential environments.
- Inform staff, pupils, parents/carers and partners about confidentiality, and it’s limitations in school. Some issues have to be shared with other people/agencies, e.g. child protection, and the differences in requirements of confidentiality between professionals should be recognised.

Contact number of Police - Main switchboard 08451135000

Contact number Social Care – 02476 788555

Desired outcomes

- Staff are trained in dealing with issues of confidentiality and feel confident doing so
- Pupils are aware of and understand how confidentiality works within the school
- Pupils feel they have control over their own lives and actions
- Communication between staff, pupils, parents and other members of the school community is successful and effective
- Pupils know who they can talk to and when situations are treated as confidential. They also recognise why some disclosures cannot be treated this way.
- Pupils can understand their own feelings and opinions and are confident expressing them.
- Pupils and staff know where they can access relevant support when they need it.
- Referrals to outside specialist services are made more easily and are appropriate to needs.

Management and co-ordination

There is an identified member of the senior management team who oversees all aspects of confidentiality within school. Their role is to ensure the following:

- An effective structure to oversee the development, implementation, monitoring and review of this policy and to encourage a participatory approach to achieving the objectives
- Staff are aware that they are required to pass on confidential information in the following circumstances:
 - Child protection
- Members of staff are aware of whom to inform in the event of different types of disclosures of a personal nature
- Parents/carers' and pupils right to view their own educational records upon written request is facilitated by the school (it is therefore not possible to guarantee the confidentiality of recorded information).

Staffing and staff development

- Courthouse Green recognises that all staff, including support staff and lunchtime supervisors, are entitled to support and training relating to confidentiality. A range of provision will need to be identified that meets staff needs across a range of roles and responsibilities.
- Areas of staff expertise and individual staff development needs will be identified through existing staff development systems. This will be ascertained through (e.g. staff audit, performance management, etc)
- Staff will seek advice and support for themselves when dealing with a disclosure whilst keeping the individual's identity anonymous.

Partnerships

Our school values working in partnership with parents/carers and with the wider school community and sees it as an essential part of promoting healthy lifestyles. Partnership working will be promoted through (e.g. policy development, home-school contracts, working with outside agencies, health professionals, Healthy Schools staff, work with parents, etc.).

Responsibilities to parents/carers/pupils

- Staff will encourage pupils to inform and seek support from their parents/carers.

- School will inform parents/carers following advice from Social Care if it is judged and identified to be in the best interests of the child. (See Guidance on school specific information – Appendix 1).
- Any information recorded about a pupil will be written in an objective style with the guidance from a member of SMT. Pupils will be advised (wherever possible prior to a disclosure) what kinds of disclosure will require information to be shared, what will be done with the information and who else will have access to it.
- Before sharing any disclosed information with parents/carers, schools need to either obtain the consent of the pupil or consider the possible consequences of sharing the information, taking into account knowledge of family circumstances. This will need to be done on a case-by-case basis.

Working with external agencies

Anyone working with pupils from the school, particularly on sensitive areas of the curriculum, will be made aware of the school's confidentiality policy.

Recorded Information

In reference to recorded information, agencies such as the Police and Children and Young People's Services may be able to get a court order to gain access to *processed* information, which the school deems confidential. This can also include the Local Authority's legal department and insurers, as well as other solicitors, e.g. in custody cases.

Data Protection

All staff are familiar with the guidelines under the Data Protection Act. The following points support 'Confidentiality' and will be adhered to:

- Adults and children will be referred to by their initials in reports and/or e-mails.
- Discussion about identified children or staff should be with the appropriate professionals and in an appropriately private place.
- Discussion of sensitive information regarding staff, children and families (including general gossip) is unacceptable. If this guidance is not followed, it could be judged as a disciplinary matter.
- Class lists will not be available to parents/carers.
- Photographs of children used for media purposes will only be taken with the permission of parents and only have the child's first name.
- All recording of images will be done with the appropriate permission of parents and the class teacher will be responsible for checking this.
- For school performances/assemblies, a member of SMT will inform parents at the beginning of the performance whether they can or cannot take photos and/or videos.

Information Sharing Protocol (ISP)

Courthouse Green School and its staff recognise the importance of information sharing and its vital role in enabling early intervention and preventative work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children and their families, but also aware of the need to treat information confidentiality. The following guidelines/questions support when confidential information should be shared:

- If there is a clear and legitimate purpose to share information
- If confidential information has consent to share
- If consent is refused, or good reasons not to seek consent to share confidential information and a child and/or family is considered to be at risk of significant harm
- If information shared is done appropriately and securely.
- Is the information confidential?
- Does the information enable a living person to be identified?

Further guidance can be found on the 'Flowchart of key questions for information sharing' – Appendix 2.

Policy details

Date of policy: August 2017

Date of next Review: August 2020

Confidentiality Policy: Appendix 1

Guidance on School Specific Information

1. Examples of where a confidentiality policy might be of use:

- A pupil knows someone who is bullying others at the school but is unsure about whether or not to tell.
- A pupil starts sharing something very personal in a classroom situation.
- A school uses staff or peers as a support system for pupils, eg listening, befriending.
- A pupil tells a member of staff that they are pregnant or sexually active.
- A pupil informs a lunchtime supervisor that their Dad is hitting their Mum.
- A pupil talks to a member of staff about their knowledge of a crime, eg shoplifting, assault.

2. Exceptions to Confidentiality

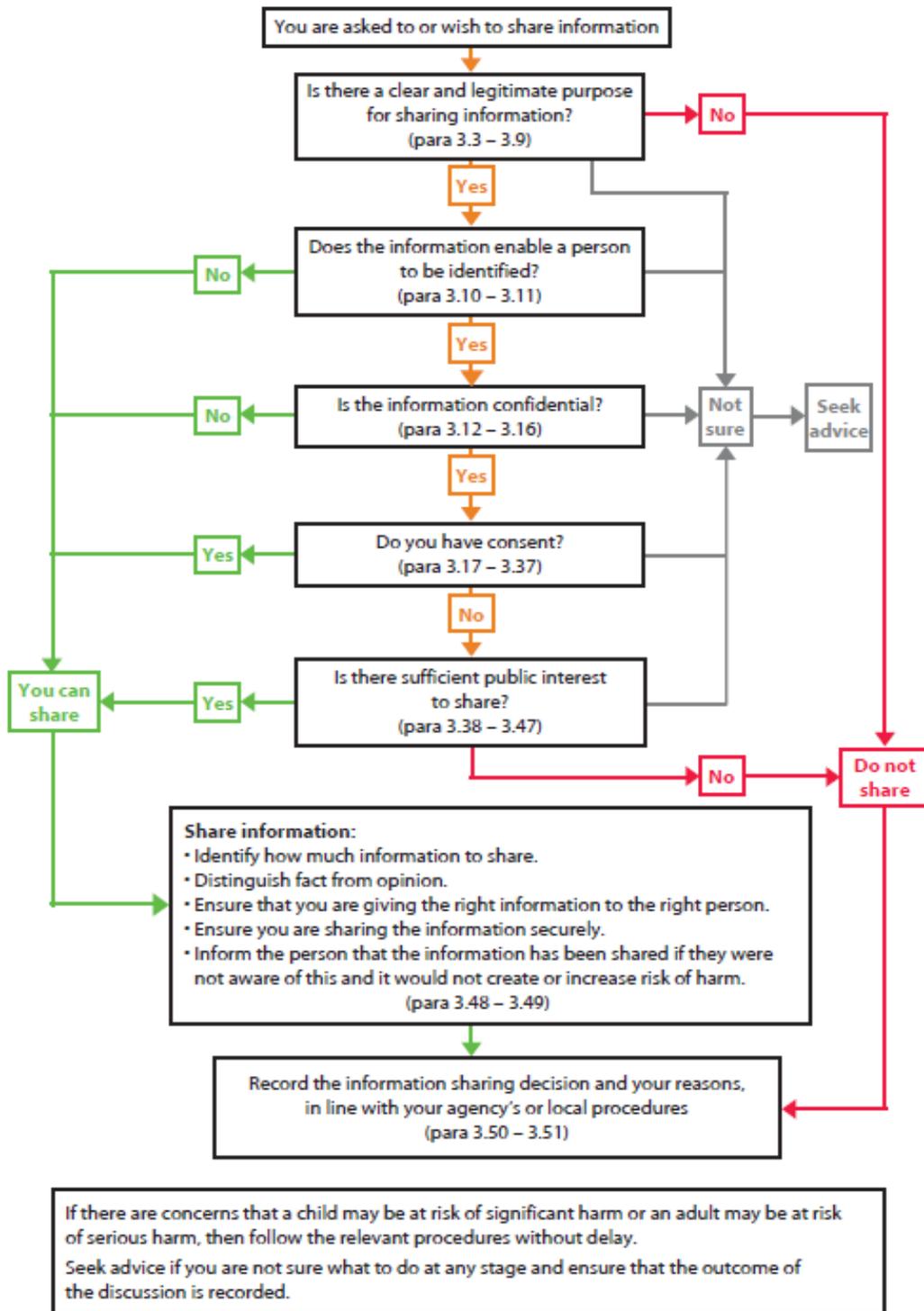
Likely exceptions requiring consideration by the school might include:

- where there is risk of serious harm or threat to life
- where a pupil needs urgent medical treatment
- where potential or actual serious crime (eg murder, rape) is involved
- where safeguarding national security is involved eg terrorism.

This must be consistent with other policies eg managing drug related incidents.

Confidentiality Policy: Appendix 2

Flowchart of key questions for information sharing



(from 'Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers')