

Robert Arkenstall Primary School

Confidentiality Policy

It is the aim of Robert Arkenstall Primary School to provide a broad curriculum and education of the highest quality within a happy, safe, secure and stimulating environment, which enables each child to experience success; to equip them with skills as thoughtful, caring and active citizens eager to explore the possibilities of the world.

pursue possibilities; love learning

This policy is published on the school website and is available
on request from the school office

Governor Committee	Finance & Personnel
Reviewer	R Fisher
Ratified	May 2021
Review period	2 years
Next review due	May 2023

Our school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Introduction

Robert Arkenstall Primary School puts the child at the heart of the learning process and aims to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It seeks to implement the underlying principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda and to address the issues which may arise about confidentiality. It is committed to developing creative and positive ways for the child's voice to be heard whilst recognising the responsibility to use, hold and safeguard information received and accessed by staff in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. Sharing information unnecessarily is an erosion of trust.

The school is mindful that it is placed in a position of trust by all stakeholders and there is a general expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality. All schools are asked, on occasions, to keep information confidential, which can relate to a variety of issues including family matters, drugs use, abuse or other dangerous or illegal activities.

Confidentiality is a whole school issue; therefore it is important to clarify that all employees, governors and others associated with the school community (referred to in this document as school representatives) follow the same clear and explicit policy. Pupils, parents and carers should be made aware of this and how it works in practice.

Aims

- To provide consistent messages in school in relation to handling information about children once it has been received;
- To foster an ethos of trust within the school;
- To protect the child at all times;
- To reassure the children that their best interests will be maintained;
- To encourage pupils to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems of any sort;
- To ensure that all school representatives, parents/carers and pupils are aware of the schools confidentiality policy and procedures;
- To give clear guidance to all school representatives about confidentiality, when and in what circumstances it is appropriate to share information (see *Guidance in Issues of Confidentiality* document for employees, governors and volunteers);
- To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues;
- To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality;
- To ensure that pupils and parents/carers are reassured that, if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first and then supported appropriately;
- To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed (see *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*);
- To ensure that staff are clear that each individual has a responsibility to raise concerns about any unacceptable practice or behaviour relating to confidentiality (see *Whistleblowing Policy*).

Employees should be aware that breaches of confidentiality in a manner contrary to this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Implementation

- All information about individual children is confidential and is only shared with those school representatives that have a need to know;
- All social services, medical and personal information about a child is held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than appropriate school staff;
- 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 has clearly identified the senior members of staff who are Child Protection Officers, and the information is readily visible and accessible in school. Currently **Kate Bonney, Karen Gale, Rob Fisher**;
- Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every two years, with annual updates (see *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*);
- It is important that class teachers and support staff are aware of some confidential matters in order to support individuals. These staff will respect the sensitivity of such cases and not divulge information to people, including other staff, unconnected professionally with the individual concerned;
- When volunteers, such as parents and friends of the school are working in classes, they do not discuss educational matters including behaviour issues outside the classroom;
- Volunteers, students and supply teachers are asked to sign to say they have read this policy before working in school;
- Information about children is shared with parents/carers but only about their child. Parents/carers do not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time. However parents/carers are made aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school;
- Photographs of children are not used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet;
- School representatives should never discuss anything to do with school, which is of a confidential nature in relation to pupils or other members of the school community on social media (see *Social Media Policy*);
- School representatives should ensure that their use of mobile phones and other mobile devices is in line with the school policy for their acceptable use and that unacceptable use could compromise confidentiality (see *Mobile Phones and Devices Policy* and *Acceptable Use Policy*);
- Governors, in particular those sitting on Discipline Committees, do not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of the meeting. In addition governors need to be aware that there will be times when it is inappropriate in meetings to use names of individual pupils or staff e.g. SEN issues, individual performance;
- At full governing body meetings matters such as pupil exclusion, personnel issues and personal details of any member of the school community will be dealt with in the headteacher's report. This is not for the knowledge of persons outside the governing body meeting;
- Governors need to be mindful that from time to time, in meetings, issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All papers are confidential and must be securely destroyed if printed. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils e.g. discipline or exclusions or parents. 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 arises outside the governing body;

- Governors should only use secure Governor email addresses provided by the school for Governor business;
- Staff performance management will be carried out confidentially. Targets for individuals, named lesson observation sheets and other performance data will be in the head teacher's office and electronic records will only be available from a secure area of the Google Drive, accessed by SMT only. CPD data can be shared with the CPD co-ordinator.

In lessons

- Ground rules and distancing techniques are 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.

Personal disclosures

- If disclosures from pupils take place at an inappropriate place or time the member of staff will conform to the *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, try to talk to the pupil concerned confidentially before the end of the day and must explain to the child that the information could be shared with someone else;
- The member of staff may talk to an appropriate colleague, to decide on a suitable action, without giving the name of the pupil.

Equal opportunities

All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs.

However, staff may need to discuss an individual case with a class or group. For instance it can support the inclusion of a child with Asperger's Syndrome or Autism, if their peers are made aware of the condition and so have some idea of what to expect. Similarly a child with visual impairment can be supported if his/her friends know how to look out for them in the playground. In such cases permission will be sought from the child and his/ her parents/carers.

Health professionals

Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality when working in a one to one situation. When working in a classroom they are bound by relevant school policies.

Other Related Policies

This policy should also be read in relation to the following documentation:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Mobile Phones and Devices Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Whistleblowing policy

Guidance documents include:

- *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for adults who work with children and young people.*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education.*
- *Guidance on Issues of Confidentiality.*