

ST. GREGORY'S R.C. JMI

GOVERNORS STATUTORY POLICY



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

December 2019

Review December 2021 (Biannual)

St. Gregory's R.C. V.A. Primary School recognises its role and responsibility in relation to confidentiality. The safety, well being and protection of our pupils are the paramount considerations in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality, with the appropriate sharing of information between school staff being an essential element. Issues concerning personal information may arise at any time whereby disclosures from pupils may suggest situations at home or at school which would involve child protection matters.

It is important that pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered to individuals so that they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health or other personal issues they want to discuss.

St. Gregory's School aims to respect everyone's right to privacy, therefore care and due consideration will be taken over any decisions to break confidentiality.

Application of the Policy

Everyone in the school is expected to work within the guidelines of this policy; staff and pupils. So, too, parents, carers and visitors.

Equal opportunities

St. Gregory's School is committed to provide appropriate confidentiality to all of its pupils. This policy aims to ensure that all situations and issues will be dealt with consistently, regardless of culture, faiths and family backgrounds. Pupils with Special Educational Needs may be given additional support to help clarify the issues.

Aims and Objectives

- to provide clear and consistent messages for pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors about confidentiality in school;
- to ensure that trust is established to enable pupils, staff, parents and carers to seek help both inside and outside of school;
- to ensure pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors understand the accurate meaning of confidentiality;
- to ensure pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors understand when confidentiality must be broken;
- to ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures for communicating information about pupils, parents and carers;
- to ensure that when confidentiality must be broken, appropriate action is taken;

Definition of confidentiality

The dictionary definition of confidential is:- "something which is spoken or given in confidence; private, entrusted with another's secret affairs"

When speaking in confidence to someone, the confider believes that the confidant

will not discuss the content of the conversation with any other parties. When this is the case, absolute confidentiality has been maintained. Within a school setting there will be situations where teachers may come to possess sensitive information about pupils and only in exceptional circumstances will such information be handled without parental knowledge. Therefore, in practice, there are few situations in school where absolute confidentiality is offered.

St. Gregory's School acknowledges that there are few situations where absolute confidentiality can be maintained. However, we will do the utmost to ensure the safety, well-being and protection of the pupils and staff by ensuring a trust is established whereby pupils and staff can seek help and that when it is essential to share personal information good practice is followed.

The general rule is that staff should make it clear to pupils, at the beginning of a conversation, that there are limits to confidentiality. These limits relate to the safety, well-being and protection of the pupil. When confidentiality has to be broken the pupils will be encouraged to do this for themselves, whenever possible, before further action is taken. If there is a child protection issue where the pupil or others are likely to be at risk of harm, there is a duty to inform the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection, or the Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection, who may have to involve other agencies, (refer to the school's Child Protection Procedures for further advice).

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances:-

1. In the classroom in the course of a lesson given by a member of teaching staff or outside visitor, including health professionals. Careful consideration must be given to the content of the lesson and establishing ground rules to ensure confidential disclosure are not made. It should be made clear to pupils this is not the time or place to disclose confidential, personal information. The school will make every effort to depersonalise situations and issue so that topics can be explored without personal information being disclosed.

In situations where health professionals are contributing to the delivery of PSHE and circle time they are bound by the same confidentiality as the teacher. It may be considered best practice to encourage health professionals to negotiate their own ground rules to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate disclosures.

2. One to one disclosures to members of school staff (including voluntary staff).

Members of staff must know the limits of confidentiality they can offer to pupils, parents or carers. In situations where concerns for a pupil's safety and welfare come to the attention of the staff member advice should be sought from the Designated or Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection as soon as practically possible. Staff will encourage pupils to discuss difficult issues with parent or carers, however, staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with their parent or carers if such a disclosure would place the child at risk of harm.

3. Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional

Health professionals, such as the school nurse, can give one-to-one medical advice to a pupil on health related matters. The school nurse should recognise the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents and carers. However, as the needs of the pupil are priority they will not insist that parents or carers are informed about any medical advice or treatment they give. School nurses / health professionals must always adhere to local child protection procedures.

The legal position for school staff

School staff, (including non-teaching and voluntary staff), cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality. It is important that pupils, parents and carers understand this. Therefore, school staff, (including non-teaching and voluntary staff), are not obliged to pass on information about pupils to parents or carers, although where the staff member believes the pupils to be at moral or physical risk, or in breach of the law, they must ensure that the pupil is aware of the risks and encourage them to seek support for the parents or carers. The safety, well-being and protection of the child are paramount considerations in all decisions school staff make about confidentiality.

School staff are not obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue. However, at St. Gregory's School we believe it is important that staff share concerns about pupils in a professional and supportive way, on a need to know basis. This aims to ensure that the safety and well-being of any pupil is maintained and supported.

School staff, counsellors and health professionals

It is essential that all staff members know the limits of confidentiality they can offer to pupils, parents and carers and seek appropriate support or help for the pupils, parents and carers if further action is required. If concerns about a child come to the attention of a staff member, for example through observation of behaviour, injuries or disclosure, however insignificant it may appear, then the member of staff must consult with the Designated Teacher for Child Protection. All staff members encourage the pupils to discuss any issues with their parent or carers and vice-versa. However, the needs of the pupil are of paramount importance and information will not automatically be shared with parents or carers unless it is considered in the best interest of the child.

Health professionals and counsellors are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality. Any service provided in school to the pupils by these professionals will remain confidential. Any information will be shared with the school staff in an appropriate manner or, if necessary, as defined in the school's Child Protection Policy.

Visitors and volunteers

At St. Gregory's School we expect all visitors and volunteers, (except those identified in the previous paragraph), to report any personal disclosures by pupils, parents or carers to Designated Teacher for Child Protection as soon as possible after a disclosure is made, in an appropriate setting, where confidentiality can be maintained. The Designated Teacher for Child Protection will then decide if further action needs to be taken to ensure the safety, protection and well being of the pupil.

Parents and carers

St. Gregory's School believes it is important to work in partnership with parents and carers regarding their child's progress at school, including concerns about their progress and their behaviour. However, we need to strike a balance so that pupils feel confident that they can share any concerns or ask for help when they need it. School staff will encourage the pupils to share their concerns with their parents or carers themselves.

The safety, well-being and protection of all of our pupils are the paramount considerations in all decisions that staff at this school make about confidentiality.

Complex cases

Where there are areas of doubt as to whether or not there is a child protection issue and whether or not child protection procedures need to be initiated then the situation must be discussed with the school's Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

Ground rules to be used in lessons

Setting ground rules in the classroom will ensure a safe environment for Teaching, in particular in PSHE and circle time. This reduces anxiety to pupils and staff and minimises unconsidered, unintended disclosures.

The teacher should establish the ground rules, together with the pupils, at the beginning of each half term of teaching PSHE and circle time.

At the beginning of each PSHE lesson and circle time, pupils should be reminded of the ground rules by the teacher. Any external visitor who comes in to deliver a session will be asked to set adhere to the ground rules that have been established in consultation with the pupils for that lesson.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body:-

Signed: _____ (Head Teacher) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Chair of Governors) Date: _____

Date:- 4th December 2019

To be reviewed at least biannually, no later than the Autumn Term Governors' Meeting, 2021.