



Confidentiality Policy



Stour Federation Partnership

1. RATIONALE

1.1 In the Stour Federation Partnership we believe that: -

- 1.1.1 The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' well-being and safety.
- 1.1.2 It is an essential part of the ethos of each school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside school in order to minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- 1.1.3 Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- 1.1.4 The Stour Federation Partnership's attitude to confidentiality is easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- 1.1.5 Issues concerning personal information including sex and relationships and other personal matters can arise at any time.
- 1.1.6 Everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- 1.1.7 Everyone in the school community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health, sex and relationship or other personal issue they want to discuss.

2. DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 2.1 Confidentiality is defined as **'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'**.
- 2.2 The confider is asking for the content of the conversation to be kept secret. Anyone offering absolute confidentiality to someone else would be offering to keep the content of his or her conversation completely secret and discuss it with no-one.
- 2.3 In practice there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our school. We strive to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and good practice are followed. This means that in most cases what is offered is limited confidentiality.

- 2.4 Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances.
- 2.5 **Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The pupil will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in the information sharing.**

3. LEVELS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances: -

- 3.1 **In the classroom in the course of a lesson** - given by a member of teaching staff or an outside visitor including health professionals. Careful thought needs to be given to the content of the lesson setting the climate and establishing ground rules to ensure confidential disclosures are not made. It should be made clear to pupils that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential personal information. When a health professional is contributing to a school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.
- 3.2 **One-to-one disclosures to members of school staff** - it is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents and carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the pupil or parent/carer, within the school and from other agencies where appropriate. All staff in The Stour Federation Partnership encourage pupils to discuss different issues with their parents or carers and vice versa.

However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

- 3.3 **Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in school** - health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils provided they are competent to do so and follow the Fraser Guidelines (guidelines for doctors and other health professionals on giving medical advice to under 16's). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a pupil's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

4. THE LEGAL POSITION FOR SCHOOL STAFF

- 4.1 All Stour Federation Partnership staff should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents or carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of our school's staff can or should give such a promise.

- 4.2 The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at our schools make about confidentiality.
- 4.3 School staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue, however in The Stour Federation Partnership we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about pupils' safety and well-being is maintained.
- 4.4 There may be times when general school information is shared with staff that is required to remain confidential for certain periods of time, e.g. staff movement and new class structures. Staff must be aware that they hear this information in their work capacity.
- 4.5 Any breach of confidentiality, including posting on social networking sites may be subject to disciplinary action.

5. TEACHERS, COUNSELLORS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- 5.1 Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he or she should indicate to a child that the child could make a disclosure in confidence and whether such a confidence could then be maintained having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement the teacher, counsellor or health professional must consider the best interests of the child, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children and possible child protection issues.
- 5.2 All teachers and teaching assistants in The Stour Federation Partnership receive basic training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and for at least 3 hours every 3 years. Teachers are expected to follow the Stour Federation Partnership's child protection policy and procedures.

6. VISITORS AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

- 6.1 In the Stour Federation Partnership we expect all non-teaching staff to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers of a concerning nature to the designated safeguarding leads as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot over hear. A designated safeguarding lead will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

7. PARENTS AND CARERS

- 7.1 The Stour Federation Partnership believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at school, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our pupils can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal issue, staff at each school will be encouraged to also discuss the

matter with their parents or carers and may be supported to do so where it is appropriate.

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

8. COMPLEX CASES

8.1 Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, the designated officer for child protection will consult with the local area Safeguarding Board. The Executive Headteacher is one of the designated safeguarding leads.

9. SUPPORT FOR STAFF

9.1 Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils. In the Stour Federation Partnership we prefer staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because you don't have all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about pupils home with you. Staff should discuss any concerns with the Associate Headteachers or Executive Headteacher.

10. GOVERNORS

10.1 Governors, in particular those sitting on discipline committees, will not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside the meeting.

10.2 Governors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, children or parents/carers. Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be confidential.

11. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

11.1 This policy has links with the following school policies: -

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Whistleblowing
- Behaviour
- Sex and Relationships
- Drug Education
- Anti-Bullying
- Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)

12. DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

- 12.1 This policy has been distributed to all teaching and non-teaching staff as part of ongoing whole school training on safeguarding and child protection. A copy of the policy can always be found electronically on each school's learning portal and a hard copy on the safeguarding notice board in the staff room.
- 12.2 All new staff will be made aware of the policy when they join the Stour Federation Partnership.