



# Confidentiality Policy

**This policy was reviewed by: Vicky Brown/J Taylor**

**This policy was adopted by the Governing Body in October 2023**

**It will be reviewed in October 2025**

*"For learning, smiling and remembering"*

## **Aim**

To protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff.

## **Rationale**

Avondale Primary School seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It seeks 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. 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.

## **Definition of confidentiality**

Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'. 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.

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. Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances.

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.

## **Objectives:**

- To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children and their families 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 children 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 monitoring of cultural, gender and special educational needs.
- To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that ground rules are set for the protection of all.
- To understand that health professionals have their own code of conduct.
- To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child - but not of any child for whom they have no parental responsibility.

## Guidelines

- All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
- All social services, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than designated and appropriate school staff.
- The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
  - a) The school has appointed the head teacher, Mrs Wright and Mrs Morgan as Designated Safeguarding Leads and they receive regular training.
  - b) There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents. All staff have regular training on child protection issues.
  - c) There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse.
  - d) Staff are aware that effective sex and relationship education which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue.
  - e) Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
  - f) Any intolerance against the protective characteristics - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation - is unacceptable and anyone who encounters or witnesses such intolerance should follow the guidance laid out in the school's Behaviour and Discipline, Whistleblowing, Equality or SEND policies.
- Parents/carers and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and the school has a duty to report child protection issues.
- 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. Child Protection disclosures will be discussed with parents if it is appropriate before the relevant authorities are informed. In exceptional circumstances confidentiality will be broken.
- 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 should not be able to be identified.
- Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PSHE sessions dealing with sensitive issues such as "sex and relationships" and "drugs". School staff need to be proactive to support children but, at the same time, ensure that sensitive information is not revealed in a public arena. Even when sensitive information appears to be widely known it should not be assumed by those immediately involved that it is appropriate to discuss or share this information further.
- Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should only be accessible to the class teacher who will ensure that TAs and volunteers are given information essential for their working with that child.
- Photographs of children should not be used without parents'/carers' permission. 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 but only about their own child. Parents should not normally have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time. Parent helpers and other volunteers in the classroom are advised of the need to keep confidential any information about children that they may see or hear. Parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school.
- All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. This should be clearly understood by those who have access to it, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEN reports, SEN minutes of meetings and social services minutes of meetings and reports will be circulated in an envelope.
- Any personal data will only be kept as long as necessary or for the length of time as stipulated by law.
- Staff laptops are password protected.
- Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.
- Volunteer helpers are expected to keep anything that they see or hear about pupils, families or staff whilst working in school confidential. Any breach of this would negate them being able to work in school.
- Governors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such papers should be marked as confidential. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils 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.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle.

### **Conclusion**

Avondale Primary School has 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. Staff and volunteers are expected to sign the staff behaviour policy which confirms they will adhere to the schools' confidentiality policy.

### **Links with other policies**

This policy has links with the following school policies:

- Child Protection/Safeguarding
- PSCHS inc SRE
- Anti-Bullying
- Whistleblowing
- Equality

### **Dissemination and implementation**

This policy has been distributed to all teaching and support staff. A copy of the policy can always be found on teacher shared. All new staff will be expected to read a copy of the policy when they join the school.

Policy adopted Autumn 2023