

Confidentiality Policy

Introduction and Context

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar, Alford, 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 appropriate sharing of information amongst academy staff is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' wellbeing and safety. Everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality. It is, however, an essential part of the ethos of our academy that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the academy and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared (beyond a 'need to know' basis) to ensure that staff and pupils are supported and safe.

The perceived benefits of having a formal academy confidentiality policy are that:

- It highlights the importance of pupils being able to talk to adults in school to share their problems in a safe and supportive environment.
- Pupils, parents and staff know the boundaries of confidentiality so that they will feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns
- It safeguards the well-being of those involved in the disclosure of confidential information.
- It builds trust and understanding between pupils and staff.
- It empowers each pupil to exercise control over the choices that will affect their life.
- It prevents the need to deal with each disclosure as a crisis in isolation.

A Definition of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is "an understanding that any information shared with someone in trust can only be passed on to a third party with the agreement of the person disclosing it".

Please note that in this policy, a 'disclosure' is the sharing of any private/personal information. It is a general term and does not just relate to child protection issues.

The Limits of Confidentiality

In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered at this academy. We try to strike the 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 and child protection issues, good practice is followed.

This means that, in most cases, what is on offer is limited confidentiality.

Staff, pupils, parents/carers will be informed about the limits of confidentiality in this school so that they are aware that most issues have to be shared with other people/agencies.

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.

Members of staff will be made aware of who to inform in the event of different types of disclosures of a personal nature.

Confidential discussions need to take place in a confidential environment. Public places such as the staffroom, the classroom and the playground are not, in general, confidential environments. In addition to the support provided by tutors, subject staff, support staff and senior staff, pupils have access to the school nurse by appointment.

Parents/carers and pupils have the right to view educational records upon written request. It is therefore not possible to guarantee the confidentiality of recorded information.

Staff must pass on confidential information in the following circumstances:

- Child protection
- 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
- Drugs-related incidents
- Possession and/or use of offensive weapons
- Where safeguarding national security is involved eg terrorism

Responsibilities to parents/carers

- Members of staff are not legally obliged to inform parents/carers in many instances when personal information has been disclosed. However, pupils do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to their parents. No member of staff should give such a promise. The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at Queen Elizabeth's make about confidentiality.
- Where it is believed that the pupil may be at emotional or physical risk, or in breach of the law, staff will ensure that the pupil is aware of the risks they face and ensure support is provided. In most cases they will also inform parents.
- Staff will encourage the pupil to inform and seek support from their parents/carers.

Illegal activity

- Members of staff are not obliged to inform the police on most matters relating to illegal activity e.g. illegal drugs activity, assaults
- However, the academy's code of conduct will be followed with respect to sanctions.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support staff) will be made aware of the confidentiality policy and their entitlement to training and support in its implementation. The policy will be included in the staff handbook, which all staff have a copy of. All staff are under a contractual obligation to uphold the policy, as with all other academy policies, and failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary procedures being followed.

Staff should seek advice and support for themselves when dealing with a disclosure but may decide that it is appropriate to keep the individual's identity anonymous. The academy will maintain an up-to-date list of appropriate contacts for staff so that they can seek support. This will include the following members of staff at this academy:

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| <i>Miss A Francis</i> | <i>Headteacher & Designated Safeguarding Lead</i> |
| <i>Mrs J Harding</i> | <i>Designated person for Child Protection</i> |
| <i>Mr M Johnson</i> | <i>E-safety Officer</i> |
| <i>Mrs N Daniels</i> | <i>Head of Sixth Form</i> |
| <i>Mrs G Bulman</i> | <i>Head of Middle School</i> |
| <i>Mr J Felton</i> | <i>Head of Lower School</i> |

Working with External Agencies

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

Academy staff and staff from external agencies will establish at the beginning of lessons dealing with potentially sensitive topics that it is inappropriate to disclose personal information during the lesson. Ground rules need to be agreed which ensure individuals do not pressure one another to answer questions about their own experiences.

Staff will outline the sources of support available to any pupil who may wish to discuss the topics and/or their feelings further on a one-to-one basis.

Recording Information

The school acknowledges that:

- Pupils and their parents/carers have a right to gain access to *processed* information upon written request.
- Agencies such as the Police and Social Services Dept. 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.

Any information recorded about a pupil should be written in a way that assumes it will be read by either the subject or their parents/carers.

In order to comply with the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records (issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000), any *processed* information will be stored in accordance with the Schools Record Management Systems.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This Confidentiality Policy will be reviewed after each significant disclosure to ensure that the policy and procedures work appropriately.

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis (at least every 2 years) in line with other policy documents. Pupils will be consulted during the review process.

Communicating the Policy

The policy will be communicated to all school staff and governors (via the staff handbook), parents/carers (via the Tuesday letter and school website), pupils (via form tutors, assemblies and student planners), partner agencies and relevant visitors.

The policy will be listed on the academy's publication scheme (Freedom of Information Act 2000).

A pupil-friendly version of the policy, produced with the help of pupils, is summarised in Lower School Student Planners. All students will be made aware of its existence, its content and how it might affect them.

Reviewed July 2017.