

*St Osburg's Catholic Primary School and Nursery*



# **Confidentiality Policy**

**February 2017**

Approved by Governors – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017

Signed

Chair of Governors

# St Osburg's Catholic Primary School

## Confidentiality Policy

### Rationale

St Osburg's Catholic Primary School caters for children between the age of 4 and 11 years. We aim to create a child centred caring Christian community in which each child will feel valued, confident and secure. Our aim is that in this environment of trust, openness and respect, loving relationships between the children and all members of the school community will be encouraged and each member can reach their full potential.

In this way we will reflect Jesus' Commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you."

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.

Teachers cannot and should not promise total confidentiality. The nature of our work is such that teachers may find themselves party to personal information. When a pupil discloses information which is sensitive, not generally known and which the pupil asks not to be passed on the request will be honoured unless child protection issues, police investigation or the need for referral to external services becomes apparent.

### Aims

- To protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles
- To ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff
- To encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having difficulties
- To give staff the confidence to deal with sensitive issues

### Definition of Confidentiality

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

The general rule is that staff should make 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 will be encouraged to do this for themselves whenever this is possible.

### Objectives:

1. To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
2. To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
3. To ensure that staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality, policy and procedures.
4. To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
5. To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
6. To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
7. To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all including rigorous monitoring of cultural, gender and special needs.

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8. To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed (see the Child Protection Policy)
9. To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
10. To understand that health professionals are bound by different code of conduct.
11. To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

#### **Guidelines**

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
2. All social care, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
3. The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
  - a) The school has appointed the Headteacher for child protection who receives regular training. In the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher would be the next contact.
  - b) There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents. And 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 (see Disciplinary Policy)
  - d) Staff are aware that effective family life 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 about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and should follow the schools discipline policy.
  - g) Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.
4. 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.
5. 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. The school would share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities.
6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that in exceptional circumstances confidentiality will be broken.
7. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special needs. A lot of data is generated in schools by these categories but individual children should not be able to be identified.
8. The school has a designated senior member of staff as Child Protection Officer. Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every year for all staff.

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9. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other citizenship sessions dealing with sensitive issues such as family life and drugs. Strategies are in place and all children are aware of them for dealing with sensitive information which may fall outside the boundaries of child protection procedures. School needs to be proactive so children feel supported but information is not unnecessarily 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.

10. 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 be accessible to staff who need that information but not on general view to other parents/carers and children.

11. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. This is often a cultural issue that the school needs to be aware of. In public places the child's name should generally not be used with a photograph so that they can be identified. The school gives clear guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public school events. A letter goes out in September seeking permission.

12. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time especially at parents evening. However, 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 care records should be regarded as confidential. It 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 envelopes and once read should be returned for secure filing. Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure and each child should have their own individual log. In all other notes, briefing sheets etc a child should not be able to be identified. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.

13. 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 and should be copied onto different coloured paper. These confidential papers should be destroyed. 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

1. The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle.
2. The SEAL Scheme, Family Life policy and alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy in specified year groups.
3. The Head teacher has responsibility for monitoring this policy. Following any curriculum monitoring a positional statement is written which contributes to the School Improvement Plan.

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### Conclusion

St Osburg's Catholic 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.

Approved by the Governing Body on:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors