

## St. Saviour's Church of England Junior School

### Confidentiality Policy

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<b>Policy:</b>	Confidentiality Policy
<b>Review Period:</b>	Annual
<b>Ratified by Governing Body:</b>	May 2024
<b>Date of next review:</b>	May 2025

### **Rationale**

- Safeguarding is paramount when making decisions about confidentiality. The appropriate and proportionate sharing of information between staff and other agencies is vital to keeping our children safe.
- Staff, parents / carers, volunteers and pupils need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns.
- Issues regarding confidentiality can arise at any time.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute or unconditional confidentiality.

### **Definition**

Confidentiality is information which is given in confidence; private, entrusted with another's personal affairs.

When speaking confidentially, the giver of information has the belief that the listener or receiver will not discuss the information with others. In practice this is often not possible in school settings. Trust must be established between parties at St. Saviour's that information will only be shared in order to keep children and adults safe and for certain operational reasons. Confiders must understand these issues when sharing information. Confiders must be told of these conditions upon the confidentiality we offer. Members of staff and volunteers must understand that the sharing of information is vital but that confiders are not identified unless there is a valid reason for doing so. In short, staff need to make the limits of confidentiality clear to anyone who shares information.

### **Levels of confidentiality**

#### **In classrooms**

Teachers need to establish ground rules with children around the sharing of confidential, inappropriate or personal information. Careful thought needs to go into the planning of lessons likely to generate this type of information, such as RSE, PHSE etc. Pupils should be told when is and

is not an appropriate time and place to make a disclosure of confidential or sensitive information. Children should know who they can talk to in order to share worries or disclosures.

### **One to One**

Disclosures to school staff, including volunteers or visitors. All staff need to know that they cannot offer absolute confidentiality to pupils or families and that often, information will need to be shared in order to keep children and adults safe. The primary consideration should always be the safeguarding of children. Confidential information will only be shared where appropriate to pupil safety first and then the safety of adults. Staff should be clear that disclosures relating to child safety, or any concerns that staff may have about a child, however seemingly trivial, must be shared with Designated Safeguarding Lead Nick Bonell or John Arnold or Suzy Tift, who are also Designated Safeguarding Leads.

### **Disclosures to counsellors or therapists**

Where counsellors, play therapists or other health staff receive disclosures which relate to the safety of the child, they should report this to a DSL in school. Kent Police have given guidance that, where children disclose sexual activity, police should be informed in order to protect children from abuse or exploitation – not necessarily for the purposes of criminalising a child.

### **Teachers, FLO , support staff, visitors and volunteers**

Staff must share concerns or information, relating to safeguarding as soon as possible with a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff need to be clear with those sharing sensitive information (pupils or adults) that information will be passed to the appropriate professionals in order to keep pupils and adults safe. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide (seeking advice from KCC safeguarding advisors and Central Duty Team if necessary) what action needs to be taken to safeguard the child and any support or supervision needed by an adult. At St. Saviour's, the staff dealing with the vast majority of safeguarding issues (HT, DHT and FLO) receive monthly clinical supervision. This supervision would be extended to any staff who, it was felt by the headteacher, had to deal with a significant safeguarding issue.

### **Parents and carers**

Our school ethos is that we work in partnership with families and will share information with families about the progress, behaviour and wellbeing of their children. Where children share concerns, they are encouraged to discuss this with adults at home provided that this does not endanger them. The deciding factor in any decision about the sharing of information is the safety of the child. As per Central Duty Team guidance, if the DSL has a concern about a child and/or is planning on making a referral or consultation with Central Duty, parents / carers should be informed unless doing so would place the child at risk. Confidential, sensitive or personal information about children or families should only be shared on a need to know basis – again, the overriding priority is the safety of the child. In some circumstances, personal information may be shared about a family with a teacher. For example, the teacher and support staff may need to know about an issue at

home in order to provide pastoral or educational support effectively to a pupil. Such 'operational' sharing of information must be proportionate and with staff who really do need to know.

Where staff are unsure about information sharing, they should seek guidance first from a DSL and refer to the school's Child Protection Policy. Further guidance can be sought by contacting KCC Education Safeguarding Area Advisers (03000 423169) Front Door Team 03000 4111 11 or the Local Authority Designated Officer team 03000 410 888.

### **General Principles regarding the sharing of information by children – disclosures**

- Ensure the time and place are appropriate. If a child wishes to share something personal, worrying them or that may relate to their safety – time and space must be made available as soon as possible. Children should be given the opportunity to speak to a trusted adult, if they show a need / desire, at least before the end of the school day – as urgent action may sometimes need to be taken to safeguard a child.
- Tell the child that we cannot guarantee confidentiality and must pass on information if we think that the child is in danger, may hurt themselves or others or that they tell us about someone else who may be at risk of harm.
- Do not interrogate the child or ask leading questions. Questions may be asked to clarify events, open questions are the most useful in gaining maximum information.
- Do not put the child in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people.
- Encourage the child to share concerns with their parents or carers, provided that this does not endanger the child.

### **Support for staff**

Matters relating to the safety of children can be distressing for staff. Matters relating to the safety of children can also be complex and nuanced; staff must seek guidance from a DSL in order to be supported to make decisions which keep children safe. If in doubt, ask. Good decisions, which keep children safe, rely on information, training, experience and careful consideration. Rushed or poorly informed decisions can endanger children. DSLs will not hesitate to ask for guidance from county advisers or trained social workers, all staff should have a willingness to ask firstly a DSL (and then potentially another safeguarding professional) for advice.

The first point of contact for advice should be the DSL, not other staff. A DSL will advise if other staff should be consulted or informed. This importance of consulting a DSL first is particularly important when considering the conduct of other adults in school. Where there is concern about the conduct of a headteacher or senior staff, and staff do not feel it is appropriate to consult the DSL / Headteacher, they should consult the KCC LADO team. Staff should consult the school's whistleblowing policy and the NSPCC Whistleblowing advice line (displayed inside staff toilets in the main building) if you believe your concerns have not been properly listened to or dealt with.

In the case of female genital mutilation (FGM) teachers have a legal responsibility to report this both to the DSL and directly to the police.

Where staff need additional support around traumatic events in school, counselling or supervision will be sourced for them free of charge.

### **Other agencies**

In order to keep children safe, relevant information should be shared with Specialist Children's Services, police and Health – for example at Core Group or Strategy discussions. Such information will inform decisions social workers make regarding keeping children safe.

**All adults at St. Saviour's are expected to read this policy and ask for clarification from the headteacher should they need it. Adults at St. Saviour's are asked to sign via MyConcern as evidence that they have read and understood the policy. Any staff who join the school will be asked to read this policy, alongside other safeguarding policies when they commence employment.**