

Rucstall Primary School

Information Sharing and Confidentiality Policy



This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding
- Behaviour
- Health and Safety
- General Data Protection
- Freedom of Information

This policy applies to all staff, pupils, parents/carers, governors and partner agencies working with schools.

Aims of the Policy

At Rucstall Primary School we believe that:

- 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.
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- The school's attitude to confidentiality is open and easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- Issues concerning personal information, including sex and relationships and other personal matters, can arise at any time.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- 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.

Definition of Confidentiality

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

In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered in Rucstall Primary School. We have tried 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 is followed.

This means that in most cases what is on offer 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.

The general rule is that staff make clear that there are limits to confidentiality, during the conversation. Also, that parents are aware of the limits of confidentiality in order to best support

Rucstall Primary School

Information Sharing and Confidentiality Policy



families. 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.

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

- 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. (Ground rules should be set at the beginning of the lesson).

When a professional is contributing to a school health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

- One-to-one disclosures to members of school staff (including volunteers).

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents/carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the pupil or parent/carer and for the staff member within the school and from other agencies, where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage pupils to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

- Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professionals operating a confidential service in the 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 16s). 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. They must however ensure the safety and safeguarding of the child.

The legal position for school staff:

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to his/her parents/carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this school's staff can or should give such a promise.

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

School staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is, or may be, an issue. However, at Rucstall Primary School we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about pupils with colleagues in a professional and supportive way, on a need to know basis, to ensure staff receive the guidance and support they need and the pupils' safety and well-being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with their line manager or a DSL.

Confidentiality offered to staff working with Children's Services

Rucstall Primary School
Information Sharing and Confidentiality Policy



All staff can normally expect that their personal situations and health will remain confidential unless:

- It impinges on their terms of contract.
- It endangers children/young people or other members of staff.
- There is a legal obligation to disclose such information.
- It is necessary for legal proceedings.
- Despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or the wider public interest justifies disclosure.

Parents/carers:

Rucstall Primary School 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 matter with staff at Rucstall Primary School, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

We recognise that sometimes there are family issues which might affect a pupil, which the family will only disclose to us if they are confident that the information will remain confidential. Such information will be treated sensitively and discussed with the parent if the need is felt to share such information. This does not apply if the pupil is considered to be at immediate risk or there is a child protection concern.

Complex cases:

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, seek advice from the school's lead DSL.

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