



St Martin's School

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

STATEMENT

At St Martin's School, we understand that issues concerning personal information and other personal matters can arise at any time. We believe that children's safety, well-being and protection should always be the primary focus and most important consideration in all decisions staff at make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between staff and professionals is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' well-being and safety. Furthermore, 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 in order 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 discussing personal issues although everyone in the school community should be aware that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.

AIMS

- To ensure that children are protected at all times.
- To provide clear, unambiguous guidance, to all staff involved, as to their professional roles.
- To ensure good practice throughout the school which is clearly understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff.

OBJECTIVES

- To foster an ethos of trust, respect and equality within the School.
- To ensure that staff, parents/carers and pupils are aware of the school's responsibility on confidentiality.
- To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
- To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers, and staff.
- To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- To ensure that if there are safeguarding children concerns; that the correct procedure is followed.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue.

WHERE AND TO WHOM THE POLICY APPLIES

The policy applies to the whole school community and is made available to:

- All staff employed by the school.
- Depending on their contractual arrangements all visiting staff, working with children on the School site during the school day, including other professionals and voluntary workers.

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 at St Martin's. 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.

POLICY GUIDANCE

St Martin's prides itself on the effective communication and good relationships with parents/carers. Staff members are always available to talk to both children and parents/carers about issues causing them concern. Staff should always be aware of maintaining professional boundaries on these occasions. In addition; staff must make it clear that they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when a pupil's welfare is concerned.

- When children make disclosures to staff; pupils should be told that if there is a safeguarding issue, where they, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, staff have a duty to inform the School's Senior Designated Person (SDP) who may have to involve other agencies. (Please refer to the School's Safeguarding Policy for further advice on this.) It is important that each member of staff deals with this sensitively and explains to the pupil that they must inform the appropriate people who can help the child, but that they will only tell those who need to know in order to help.
- Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PSHE sessions dealing with sensitive issues.
- All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff members that have a *need* to know.
- 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 the appropriate school staff.
- Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.
- All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION ABOUT PARENTS / CARERS AND FAMILIES

St Martin's School recognises that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a pupil and which the family will only disclose if they can be sure the information will be treated confidentially. School staff will respect the wishes of the family and where it is felt necessary to share the information given, this will be discussed with the parent first, unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an safeguarding children concern.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION ABOUT STAFF

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

- it impinges on their terms of contract or
- it endangers pupils or other members of staff or
- there is a legal obligation to disclose such information or
- it is necessary for legal proceedings or
- despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or the wider public interest justifies disclosure.