

St Mary's P.S. Draperstown

Confidentiality Policy

STATEMENT OF INTENT

It is our intention at St. Mary's P.S. to respect the privacy of every member of the school community, while ensuring that there is a high standard of care and education.

AIMS

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

OBJECTIVES

- To foster an ethos of trust, respect and equality within the school.
- To ensure that staff, parents, guardians and pupils are aware of the school's responsibility with regards to confidentiality.
- To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children.
- To ensure that pupils and parents know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- To ensure that if there are child protection concerns, then the correct procedure is followed.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in some lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
- To ensure that parents/carers have a right of access to any records that school may hold on their child but not to any other child for whom they have no caring responsibility.

The Confidentiality Policy is linked to and supported by other policies in the school including Pastoral Care/Child Protection, Positive Behaviour Policy, Health and Safety Policy.

POLICY GUIDANCE

CONFIDENTIALITY AND STAFF

The school prides itself on effective communication and close relationships with parents and guardians. Parents are informed by phone or letter from the Principal ("Just to let you know.." note) if a matter arises concerning their child's health, behaviour, accidents and injuries during the school day. Staff are always available to talk to both children and parents/guardians about issues causing them concern. Pupils are aware that they can talk to staff members confidentially. However they are also reminded that staff may have to act on what has been said if they suspect the child is at risk. **If this is the case, staff have a duty to inform Mrs Heron, Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mrs Crozier, Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection or Ms Coyle, Principal. Other agencies may need to be contacted.** (Please refer to the school's Child Protection Policy for further advice.)

- School staff can only offer confidentiality to pupils on issues that do not involve illegal activities. Pupils must be warned that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- In all cases where a member of staff has to break confidentiality with the pupil, they must inform the pupil first and reassure them that their best interests will be maintained.
- All information about individual children is private and will only be shared with staff on a need to know basis.
- All social care, medical and personal information about a child will be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
- Pupils will be made aware of the specialist confidential services that may be available in the school community e.g. New Life counsellor, Childline, doctor.
- Staff must always consider the suitability of surroundings and the presence of other people when they have conversations with children, parents, guardians or other staff members that may need to be kept confidential.

CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

- Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PDMU activities dealing with sensitive issues.
- When situations and issues are discussed, depersonalisation techniques are used e.g. collecting group ideas, using case studies, so that issues can be discussed without personal information being disclosed.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND VISITORS

- Outside agencies and temporary members of staff are made aware of the Confidentiality Policy and must adhere to it when working in the school.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION ABOUT PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND FAMILIES

St. Mary's P.S. recognises that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a pupil and which the family will only disclose to us 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, this will be discussed with the parent first, unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection concern.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION ABOUT STAFF AND GOVERNORS

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

Agreed by staff Ratified by Governors