Roundwood Park School

Confidentiality Policy

Reviewed: May 2020
Next review: May 2023
Students, Families and Community Committee

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to make all staff, students, parents and governors aware of the correct procedures in relation to confidentiality, together with any external agencies or visitors working with students as part of the curriculum or the school's pastoral support procedures. It sets out guidance for staff about student information that they can regard as confidential and that which they cannot. It is of particular importance to staff involved with the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHCE), including sex and relationships education and drug education. Any external agencies or visitors to the school teaching or working with students must also abide by this policy.

Promoting this policy

The school makes this policy known to parents, staff, students, governors and relevant external agencies by the following means:

- Initially parents will be informed about the policy at the first meeting for new Year 7 parents/carers
- Students will be informed about the policy in their tutor groups within the PSHCE programme at the start of year 7 and reminded at the end of year 8 / start of year 9 and at the start of year 10. It will also be explained to individual students as needs arise
- The policy will always be available on the school's website
- The annual training for all staff on Child Protection will include reference to this Policy
- Presenting this policy to external agencies who work directly with students
- Governors to be given the policy as part of their induction programme

Key requirements regarding confidentiality

Members of staff must not offer students or parents blanket or unconditional confidentiality. In the event of a disclosure it must be made clear when and with whom information will be shared.

Any information concerning a student's behaviour or conduct that is likely to cause harm to themselves or to others must be passed to the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection. Otherwise any information that a student discloses to a member of staff or to a visitor should only be passed on to colleagues on a "need to know" basis.

The Designated Senior Person for Child Protection (DSP) is MARTINA MANSFIELD.

Confidentiality within lessons

At the outset of a lesson or programme in which sensitive or confidential issues might arise the teacher must ensure that the students understand that confidentiality cannot be offered as the classroom is effectively a public space. This applies especially in PSHCE but might also arise in other subjects, for example English or science.

In all such cases the teacher should establish ground rules in order to avoid inappropriate questions or answers in class or in group sessions which might lead to personal disclosures. Teachers should also ensure that students understand these rules when working with other staff and external contributors and visitors. Staff are able to get advice and support on ground rules and distancing techniques from the school's PSHCE Coordinator.

In the event that a personal disclosure is made the students must be strongly encouraged not to discuss it outside the classroom. The teacher should also explain that some information might need to be passed on to colleagues, in the best interests of the student.

The school's PSHCE Coordinator is PAULA CUNNINGHAM.

Confidentiality relating to child protection issues

Where a student discloses information about physical or sexual abuse, neglect or emotional abuse, the member of staff or visitor concerned must follow the school's child protection procedures and pass this information on to the DSP; further information is available in the school's Child Protection policy. Disclosures giving rise to child protection issues might particularly be prompted by effective delivery of sex and relationship education bringing an understanding of what is and what is not acceptable in a relationship.

If a member of staff believes that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, then these concerns must be shared with the DSP. The school will inform the family of the concerns before making any referral to Social Services unless this communication could place the child at an increased risk of significant harm.

If a referral is to be made the student will be told and the process explained unless this information could place the young person at increased risk of significant harm or hamper any investigation planned by Social Services which could have police involvement.

In the case of illegal activity of a non-child protection nature, any action the school takes will endeavour to be in the best interests of the student. This does not always mean that the police will be informed, but guidance will be sought from County's legal department and the police if needed.

External professional agencies and visitors

Sometimes external agencies work in the school and offer specific advice and support to individual students. Where they have a professional code of confidentiality which deviates from that of the school any differences must be agreed with the Headteacher and shared with the students and parents / carers. Health professionals, for example, are expected to encourage young people to speak to their parents / carers about issues which are troubling them but would not pass on this information unless it was a child protection matter.

The school's duty of care

School staff have a duty of care towards their students referred to as in 'loco parentis'. In this role of 'replacement parent' the school would normally be expected to share information which may be of concern with parents / carers. However, in the most exceptional circumstances a school could be in a position of having to handle information without parental knowledge. The reasons for not informing the parents should be discussed with the Headteacher and recorded in writing.

The school will inform students about where they might seek confidential help from a professional who does not operate under 'loco parentis' such as the school counsellor, school nurse and other local advice and support services referred to in the student planner.

The school will ensure that parents have a right of access to the records held about their child but not to those of any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

The school will ensure that personal information does not come into the public domain as a result of it failing to comply with its confidentiality obligations.