



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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AIM

To protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by pupils, students, volunteers, parents/carers and staff.

RATIONALE

First Base seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It seeks to implement the underlying principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda and to address the issues, which may arise about confidentiality. It is committed to developing creative and positive ways for the child's voice to be heard whilst recognising the responsibility to use, hold and safeguard information received. Sharing information unnecessarily is an erosion of trust.

The school is mindful that it is placed in a position of trust by all stake holders and there is a general expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
2. To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
3. To ensure that staff, students, voluntary helpers, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
4. To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
5. To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers
6. To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
7. To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all including rigorous monitoring of cultural, gender and special educational needs.
8. To ensure that if there are safeguarding issues then the correct procedure is followed (See Safeguarding Children's Policy).
9. To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
10. To understand that health professionals are bound by a different code of conduct.
11. To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for (See Freedom of Information Policy).
12. To highlight the importance of pupils being able to talk to adults in the school to share their problems in a safe and supportive environment.
13. To safeguard the well-being of those involved in the disclosure of confidential information.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998

States “Everyone has the right for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence” unless this is overridden by the public interest, eg for reasons of child protection, for the protection of public safety, public order, health or morals or for the rights and freedoms of others.

A DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an understanding that any information shared with someone can only be passed on to a third person with the agreement of the person disclosing it.

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

When speaking confidentially to someone the confider has the belief that the confidant will not discuss the content of the conversation with another. 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 situations where absolute confidentiality is offered in First Base. 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 should make clear that there are limits to confidentiality, at the beginning of the conversation. 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 him or herself whenever this is possible.

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

1. **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.

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

2. **One to one** disclosure to members of **school staff (including voluntary staff)**. It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents/carers (see note below) and any required actions and sources of further support of 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.

(Note: That is, that when concerns for a child or young person come to the attention of staff, for example through observation of behaviour of injuries or disclosure, however insignificant this might appear to be, the member of staff should discuss this with the Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator (Heather Madsen or Gillian Lee) as soon as is practically possible. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible. Please see the school Safeguarding Children's Policy.

THE LEGAL POSITION FOR SCHOOL STAFF:

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. No member of this school's staff can or should give such a promise.

The safety, well being and protection of the child are the paramount considerations 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 First Base 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 the Headteacher, senior colleague or Child Protection Co-ordinator.

All staff at this school receive basic training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and are expected to follow the school's Safeguarding Children's Policy and procedures.

VISITORS AND NON-TEACHING STAFF:

At First Base we expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff and students to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. This is to ensure the safety, protection and well being of all our pupils and staff. The Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, both to ensure the pupil gets the help and support they need and that the member of staff also gets the support and supervision they need.

PARENTS/CARERS

First Base 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 they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

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

WHEN CONFIDENTIALITY SHOULD BE BROKEN AND PROCEDURES FOR DOING THIS:

See the Safeguarding Children's Policy.

Where this does not apply and you are still concerned and unsure of whether the information should be passed on or other action taken you should speak to the Headteacher.

GUIDELINES

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
2. All social services, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff. This applies to class log books kept by teachers and TA's which should be kept in a secure place at all times. Individual children about whom information is recorded should not be immediately identifiable, ie use initials, not names. At the end of their useful life these log books should be shredded.
3. The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
 - a) The school has appointed a senior lead teacher for child protection who receives regular training.
 - b) There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents and all staff have regular training on child protection issues.
 - c) There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse.
 - d) Staff are aware that effective sex and relationship education which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue.
 - e) Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
 - f) Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable.
4. Parents/carers and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and the school has a duty to report child protection issues. This is found in our school brochure and explained in our open mornings.

5. First Base prides itself on good communication with parents and carers and staff are always available to talk to both children and parents/carers about issues that are causing concern. The school encourages children to talk to parents/carers about issues causing them concern and may in some cases support the children to talk to their parents. The school would share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities, unless a Police investigation could be compromised.
6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that in exceptional circumstances confidentiality will be broken.
7. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs. A lot of data is generated in schools by these categories but individual children should not be identified.
8. The school has appointed a senior member of staff as Child Protection Co-ordinator this at present is Heather Madsen. Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every year for all staff.
9. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PHSE sessions dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationship and drugs. Strategies are in place and all children are aware of them for dealing with sensitive information which may fall outside the boundaries of child protection procedures. School needs to be proactive so children feel supported but information is not unnecessarily revealed in a public arena. Even when sensitive information appears to be widely known it should not be assumed by those immediately involved that it is appropriate to discuss or share this information further.
10. Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should be accessible to staff who need that information but not on general view to other parents/carers and children
11. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. This is often a cultural issue of which the school needs to be aware. At no time should the child's name be used with a photograph so that they can be identified. The school gives clear guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public school events.
12. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time especially at parents evening. However, parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school. All personal information about children, including Social Care records, (which are kept separately in a locked cabinet) should be regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by those who have access to it, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEN reports, SEN minutes of meetings and social services minutes of meetings and reports will be circulated in envelopes and once read should be returned for secure filing. Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure and each child should have its own individual log. In all other notes, briefing sheets etc, a child should not be able to be identified. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.
13. Governors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such papers should be marked as

confidential and should be destroyed after use. The Managers observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the Management Committee especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents. Although decisions reached at Management Committee meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential. Managers should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the Management Committee.

14. Students and regular visitors will be made aware of our Confidentiality Policy through an information leaflet given at the start of their placement.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle.
2. The PHSE scheme of work, Sex and Relationship policy and Drug Policy will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy.
3. The Headteacher has a responsibility for monitoring this policy. Following any curriculum monitoring a positional statement is written which contributes to the School Development Plan.

CONCLUSION

First Base has a duty of care and responsibility towards pupils, parents/carers and staff. It also needs to work with a range of outside agencies and share information on a professional basis. The care and safety of the individual is the key issue behind this document.

Name of Headteacher:.....

Date of writing:.....

Consultation has taken place	Staff date		Managers' date	
Date formally approved by the Management Committee				
Date policy became effective				
Review date				
Person(s) responsible for implementation and monitoring				
Other relevant policies	PSHE	Sex & Relationships policy	Assessment policy	Safeguarding policy
	Reporting of racist incidents			