

Every Child Matters Academy Trust

Confidentiality Policy

The terms Trust and School (and levels within e.g. governors and trustees) are interchangeable and apply to all schools within the Trust

Introduction

There is no statutory requirement to have confidentiality guidance and procedures, however the DfE Sex and Relationships Education Guidance (2000) states: "Schools should have a clear, explicit confidentiality policy which should be advertised in the school community. Furthermore, enhanced healthy schools status (2005) requires a clear and up to date confidentiality policy.

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, parents/carers and staff.

Rationale

The Trust 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 stakeholders and there is a general expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality. Staff cannot offer or guarantee absolute confidentiality and will act in the best interests of the pupil at all times. This applies to parents as well as pupils.

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, 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 child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.
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 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.

Guidelines

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with staff that have a need to know.
2. All personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
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 and action should be taken in line with the school's discipline policy.
 - g. Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.
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.
 5. The school 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.
 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 able to be identified.
 8. The school has appointed a senior member of staff as Safeguarding Officer. Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken.
 9. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other Personal Social Health Education and Citizenship session dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationships 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 is proactive so that 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.
 11. The use of cameras and videos during public school events may be prohibited depending upon the circumstances of the children involved.
 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 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 care 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 their 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 copied onto different coloured paper. These confidential papers should be destroyed. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents. Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential. Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the governing body.
14. All staff, visitors, students and helpers in school are bound by confidentiality and should not disclose any information about a child or divulge information about anyone connected with the school, to anyone beyond the school without parental consent and Headteacher approval.
15. The school's primary Safeguarding Officer is the Head and any concerns regarding child protection must be reported to him/her.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The policy will be reviewed as part of the school's monitoring cycle.
2. The Personal Social and Health Education and Citizenship scheme of work, Sex and Relationship policy and Drug Policy will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy in specified year groups.

Conclusion

The Trust 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.

Confidentiality for children

This policy is to protect children in school. Where there are problems, children should speak to parents, carers, teachers, the school's PSA or the school nurse. Adults in school will try to keep information confidential but if something puts a child in danger then they will have to share the information with someone else. If a confidentiality has to be broken the adult will tell the pupil first and then support them as best they can.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 12 July 2022

Next review date: summer term 2024

Signed:

Chair of Trustees



CEO

