



# **Confidentiality Policy & Guidance**

See also the:

Child Protection Policy

Data Protection Policy

## Introduction

Confidentiality applies to much data held in schools, e.g. all records, both paper and electronic, such as medical records, attendance data etc. and all safeguarding information. The confidentiality of such data is outlined in our Data Protection Policy and in law.

This policy outlines broader matters regarding expectations for confidentiality, such as details of personal conversations, professional discussion, observations or written communications between individuals, organisations and other parties, which must be kept private.

All adult users of the school site are expected to respect what they hear and see around school as confidential. Staff are often privy to much private information. Visitors may overhear conversations which are not for public hearing. We aim to maintain confidentiality so that all members of the school community and visitors respect privacy, legal requirements and avoid unprofessional conduct, personal discomfort or allegations by others of not maintaining high standards of personal and professional conduct.

## Aims

This guidance is provided in order to:

- ensure that all teaching and support staff behave in a professional manner and those volunteers and outside partners to the school are made aware of the importance of confidentiality
- maintain and promote the reputation of Oak Green School
- comply with legal requirements and frameworks, such as child protection and data protection
- create a climate of confidentiality which is open and easily understood by everyone
- ensure that everyone in the school community can trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating in the school and are confident to use the Whistleblowing Policy if concerns arise
- build trust to enable people to confide in appropriate members of staff
- minimise the numbers of situations in which confidences are broken

## Staff must:

- adhere to the BC and school Code of Conduct
- behave in a professional way as detailed in their contract of employment and school policies, recognising that they represent school at all times
- (for teachers) meet Teacher Standards, and have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of our school, uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
- only discuss a child - their progress, behaviour or personal circumstances, as necessary, with colleagues in school or the child's parent or carer
- never discuss a child with any parent/parents other than his/her own
- ensure that conversations about children are not overheard by other children or adults, including other uninvolved staff, parents or other adults who may be e.g. volunteering or visiting
- not make any comments about children/ events/ incidents/procedures which occur in school if approached by parents either in the playground or outside of school, unless it involves their own child
- not make any comments about children, families, colleagues, or events/ incidents/procedures which occur in school to persons not directly involved or without good reason
- take care when discussing issues relating to school in public places, or with acquaintances or friends, and never use names in this context, including on social media or other platforms
- if happening upon parents off-site, will not be drawn into discussions about their child's progress out of school, and politely decline to discuss work
- answer in a way which is positive and supports the school, if e.g. friends seek an opinion about any child or an incident and suggest that they talk to a child's teacher is spoken to if there is a concern
- NEVER give personal details of children such as last names, family details, addresses etc. unless necessary,
- NEVER share data without permission of a parent or the adult themselves

- use measures such as password protected files, secure emails and websites, privacy settings etc.
- not leave sensitive information such as test results, written reports about children's progress, behaviour or personal circumstances where it can readily be seen by anyone. This would be a data breach.
- ensure that data carried on devices (e.g. tablets, Chromebooks, PCs, laptops, storage including e.g. memory sticks or external hard drives) is kept safe at all times and never left in a car or public place. This would be a data breach.
- be very aware of all matters regarding confidentiality when liaising with other services, e.g. use of initials and adherence to other organisations' requirements
- never make promises to children about keeping things secret.
- report any information of concern that is passed to them to a member of the leadership team
- report any information of a safeguarding nature immediately to CPOMS, a DSL or a member of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team.
- take great care when discussing the school in a social context and ensure that the good reputation of OGS is upheld and positive perceptions encouraged
- never mention individual children and/or families in any social arena, including on social media
- do not pass judgement on colleagues or engage in discussion. Refer this to school leaders immediately if concerns arise and be mindful of the wellbeing of colleagues.
- be aware of the potential harmful effects of sharing some information about children, families or colleagues, even if considered professional discussion and avoid gossip or transfer of information if unnecessary
- treat their own personal data with equal care and not share with colleagues or others, personal information which may not be for a public arena
- be aware that once shared, it is not possible to recall that information or control the onward sharing

#### **Volunteers/ Visitors /Students must:**

- not discuss any events or incidents which take place in school with anyone except teaching staff
- remember that even positive comments outside of school are a breach of confidentiality
- be aware of the sensitive and personal nature of information which they may overhear and not repeat this
- not use this position of privilege within the school to further the interests of their own child
- take great care when discussing the school in a social context. Individual children and/or families should never be mentioned in this kind of arena. This includes social networks.
- not make any written comment on a child's work unless required to, e.g. reading record
- understand that confidentiality covers both academic attainment and behaviour
  - if approached by other parents or friends about school issues, refer them to the child's teacher or school leader
- always behave in a professional way

#### **School Governors are school leaders and, as such, must:**

- understand that all issues covered at Governing Board meetings are confidential and should not be discussed with anyone except other board members or the clerk
- not make any comments to parents about incidents/procedures/attainment at the school unless this has been discussed with the governing board or Co Headteacher(s)
- ensure that when asked their opinion about aspects of the school by friends or parents they answer in a way which is positive and supports the school
- not discuss issues relating to the school in public places
- take care that any conversations within school are not overheard
- take great care when discussing the school in a social context
- encourage parents to use the usual channels such as class teacher and year co-ordinator where there are issues about an individual child's progress, including their own.
- never make promises to children or adults about keeping things secret. Any information of a sensitive nature which could concern a child's safety or welfare must be passed onto the Co Headteacher(s).
- Should never use personal details of members of staff or the Co Headteacher(s) to which they may have access to contact people outside of school hours, unless in an emergency

**Other Agencies:**

The Co Headteacher(s), office and other school leaders and staff also meet representatives of the Local Authority. These meetings are confidential unless it is agreed that matters should be taken elsewhere. Sharing of all school information and community members must be imparted only if necessary and with adequate forethought with e.g. any visitor, contractor or user of the site.

We very regularly invite other professionals and services into the school to work alongside us with the children. They may come from e.g. Educational Psychology Service, Behaviour Support Service, Health agencies, SENDIAS or Children's Services. All parties are expected to observe strict confidentiality about any child's history and progress and discuss it with appropriate personnel only. Paperwork remains confidential to those people involved in its creation.

Exceptions to confidentiality however extend to courts, safeguarding personal, LADO, paediatricians and medical staff, school nurse, LA (e.g. performance data), social services and SEND services.