TRIMLEY ST. MARTIN

Confidentiality Policy

Trimley St Martin Primary School
Updated March 2025

Introduction

Working in Trimley St Martin Primary School necessarily means having access in a variety of ways to information that must be regarded as confidential. **Therefore, this policy applies to all staff employed by the school, including temporary, voluntary and agency staff. It also applies to governors, volunteers, visitors on work experience placements and parent helpers.**
We aim to protect the child at all times and to give members of staff clear guidelines as to their legal and professional roles. We also need 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. The following Policy relates to all adults and children, irrespective of gender, race, faith or disability.

Aims

- To ensure that all information shared in confidence by pupils will only be used to enhance the safety, well-being and protection of all pupils in our care.
- To ensure all information regarding pupils and adults in our school community is correctly and professionally stored and communicated.

At Trimley St Martin Primary School our policy is to ensure:

- All school personnel and parental helpers will abide by a strict code of the highest professional and ethical standards in order to safeguard confidentiality of all practices and information held within the school.
- All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those members of staff that have a need to know.
- All communications regarding children should be conducted through appropriate, professional channels only. E.g. through letters, appropriate forms and professional meetings or conversations and not through informal or casual conversations.
- There is clear guidance for the handling of Safeguarding incidents [see Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy], including the fact that staff cannot guarantee confidentiality.
- Wherever possible, though, children's identities will not be revealed in data / monitoring.
- Clear ground rules are set for any lesson dealing with 'sensitive subjects', such as RSE and Sex Education.
- Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Confidentiality should therefore be discussed with health professionals, e.g. the school nurse, prior to her coming into school to deliver lessons.
- Photographs, videos and DVDs of children should not be taken without parental permission. Particular care should be taken when photographs are to be used on the internet or in the press.
- Staff are to follow the school's "Bring your own device" policy.
- Information about children will be shared with their own parents only: i.e. parents will not have access to other children's books, marks or national curriculum levels.
- Parents are regularly reminded about the information we hold about their children through our 'Privacy Notice – Data Protection Act: GDPR'

- Information shared with a child's receiving school when he or she leaves this school, will be securely transferred, either electronically, personally or by SCC courier.

- Information from other professionals, e.g. SEND staff and speech therapists should be circulated and stored securely. Each child should have his or her own file.

- When parents receive electronic communications from the school other parents are not able to access each other's e-mail addresses. At Trimley St Martin emails will be sent through ParentMail.

- Children are taught about the dangers of giving out personal details via the internet.

- Governors are mindful that, from time to time, issues are discussed regarding specific children or members of staff. Any such documentation should be marked 'confidential'. Decisions reached at governors' meetings should be minuted but not the discussions upon which the decisions were made.

Types of confidential information

Information that is regarded as confidential can relate to:

1. A variety of people e.g.

    - pupils;
    - parents;
    - staff/colleagues;
    - governors;
    - job applicants.

2. A variety of matters, e.g.

    - home addresses & telephone numbers;
    - conduct and performance;
    - performance & development review/performance management;
    - health/medical;
    - pay and contracts;
    - references;
    - internal minutes, memos etc.;
    - confidential budgetary or policy information;
    - other personal information.

These lists are not exhaustive but will extend to cover any other information of a sensitive nature relating to employees, pupils and others connected with the school and to the work of the school itself.

Potential recipients of information

Within the course of daily operation, information related to the school, or those connected to the school, may be requested by, or supplied by, or passed to a range of people. This might include:

- internal colleagues (teachers, support staff, governors);
- colleagues in other schools;
- management teams;
- pupils;
- governors;
- trade unions/professional associations;
- parents;
- partner organisations (LA, DfE, Teachers' Pensions);
- other external organisations;
- the public;
- the press;
- contractors/potential contractors.

Great care must be taken by both the recipient and the supplier of information to ensure that it is dealt with

in a sensitive manner.

Particular responsibilities – Information requests

- If someone requesting information is not known to staff, particularly in the case of telephone calls, his/her identity and the legitimacy of his/her request should be verified by calling them back. A person with genuine reasons for seeking information will never mind this safety measure.
- Wherever possible, a response to requests for information should only be given when the request has been made in writing e.g. employee references.
- The same principle applies when sending Emails. Staff should always check that the information is going to the correct person and is marked confidential where appropriate.
- **Being known as an employee of the school may mean being asked for information, for instance, by parents about a member of staff who is off sick. Although this can be awkward, parents must be informed that employees are unable to discuss confidential school matters**. Persistent enquiries should be referred to the Headteacher.
- Information relating to, or provided by, a third party should not be released without the written consent of the third party or unless an order for disclosure is made by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Where they are unsure what to do, staff should refer the matter to the Head teacher or, in her absence the deputy head teacher, for guidance.

The form confidential information can take

Confidential information can take various forms and be held and transmitted in a variety of ways, e.g.

- manual records (files);
- computerised records and memory sticks;
- written reports/minutes/agendas/file notes etc.;
- letters, memos, messages;
- telephone calls;
- face-to-face;
- Email;
- Internet.

The methods of acquiring information can also vary.

Individuals and groups may become aware of confidential information in the following ways:

- access is gained as part of the employee's day to day work;
- information is supplied openly by an external third party;
- employees may inadvertently become aware of information;
- information may be disclosed.

Particular responsibilities – information disclosed to staff

- Employees should be aware that they may have disclosed to them sensitive information in the course of their work or outside. In some circumstances the individual may request that the information remains confidential.
- **Staff will also need to be aware that they may be obliged to disclose certain information e.g. relating to child protection issues and should make it clear to the individual either that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and/or direct them to a more appropriate officer or decline to receive the information. Employees should use their discretion regarding these matters, should refer to appropriate procedures and, if in doubt, should seek advice from the Head teacher or DSL.**

Responsibility of individuals in possession of sensitive information

All information received in the course of employment, no matter how it is received, should be regarded as sensitive

and confidential. While it is often necessary to share such information, in doing so, employees should consider the following key points.

1. The nature of the information:
   - how sensitive is it?
   - how did it come to your attention?

2. The appropriate audience:
   - who does the information need to be shared with?
   - for what purpose?
   - who is the information being copied to? Why?
   - does restriction of access need to be passed on to your audience?

3. The most appropriate method of communication:
   - Verbal / in person
   - Written
   - Email

4. The potential consequences of inappropriate communication.

It is also an individual employee's responsibility to safeguard sensitive information in their possession.

Particular responsibilities – Storing Sensitive information

1. Sensitive information should be kept secure.

- Filing cabinets should be kept locked when unattended.
- Archived child protection information is kept in a separate, secure filing cabinet.
- **Sensitive information should not be left on desks or the photocopier/fax/printer.**
- **Papers should not be left lying around at home or in the car. If confidential materials or paperwork are taken out of the office, precautions must be taken to ensure that they are not accessible to third parties.**
- Appropriate steps should be taken to keep track of files which are on loan or being worked on i.e. a record of the date sent and the recipient's name and position.
- If it is necessary to supply personal files through the external mail, this must be sent by recorded delivery.
- Copies of Emails should be stored securely.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that private/confidential telephone calls/conversations are not overheard.
- Meetings where sensitive or confidential information is being discussed should be held in a secure environment.
- Confidential paperwork should be disposed of correctly either by shredding it or using the confidential waste bags stored in the school office.
- Personal data should not be used for training or demonstration purposes where fictitious data can be used.

2. Computer data should not be left exposed to others' view when unattended.

- Screen savers should be used when computers are unattended.
- Machines should be switched off over night.

3. Computer files should be kept securely.

- Passwords should be used and these should not be disclosed to colleagues unless absolutely necessary.
- Passwords should be changed periodically (at least every 6 months).
- Sensitive data should not be stored on public folders.
- Staff should be familiar with the security of Email/internet systems.
- **Staff should use the school email service for all school related emails**
- Access to individual's computers should be restricted.
- Any user Ids and passwords used for the internet should remain confidential.
- All work carried out on a computer should be stored safely either in a personal directory, or onto a memory stick or portable hard drive which should be kept securely and password protected.

- Computer files should be backed up regularly and not solely saved to the hard disk.

4. A variety of phrases may be used on correspondence to denote confidentiality. As a general rule:

- Post marked 'personal' or 'for the attention of the addressee only' should only be opened by the addressee personally;
- Post marked 'private' and/or 'confidential' may be opened by those responsible for distributing the post within the school.

5. Confidential mail which is then forwarded internally should continue to carry a confidential tag.

Other responsibilities

- *Employees should have regard to potential difficulties which may arise as a result of discussions outside work. While it is natural (and indeed can be therapeutic) to talk about work at home or socially, staff should be cautious about discussing specific and sensitive matters and should take steps to ensure that information is not passed on. Staff should be particularly aware that many people have a direct interest in education and schools and even close friends may inadvertently use information gleaned through casual discussion.*
- *Personal (e.g. home addresses and telephone numbers) and work-related information (e.g. salary details, medical details) relating to individuals, should not be disclosed to third parties except where the individual has given their express permission or where this is necessary to the particular work being undertaken, e.g. it is necessary for an individual to be written to.*

The Headteacher should comply with the procedures for the storage and sharing of information relating to individuals' Performance Management Appraisal Reviews. Personal and case files should not normally be shared with third parties other than the Assistant Head teacher and those responsible for writing references. Exceptions may apply in the case of legal proceedings.

Employees should use their discretion in these matters and if in doubt, should seek advice from the Headteacher.

The consequences of revealing confidential information without authority

Staff should ensure that they are familiar with this Confidentiality Policy and related Policies. While there is an expectation that staff will use their professional discretion in applying the Policy, they should always seek advice from the Headteacher where they are unsure.

Staff should be aware that serious breaches of the Policy may result in disciplinary action being taken. The severity of the sanction will be assessed with regard to the potential harm the disclosure will have caused to the individual concerned. Some breaches of confidentiality could be regarded as potential serious or gross misconduct that could result in dismissal.

Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body has:

delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure that all school personnel are aware that they should not promise absolute confidentiality and that the safety, well-being and

- protection of the pupil is the principal consideration in all decisions school personnel make about confidentiality;
- delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school personnel and stakeholders are aware of and comply with this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring this policy is maintained and updated regularly.

Role of the Headteacher

- The Headteacher will communicate this policy to all school personnel and volunteers on induction
- Take appropriate action in relation to this policy

Role of School Personnel

School personnel will:

- complete a confidentiality agreement
- ensure personal information regarding pupils or school personnel is confidential and will be kept so
- comply with all aspects of this policy by not promising at any time absolute confidentiality when a disclosure has been made to them;
- undertake appropriate training in the techniques to use when dealing with one-to-one disclosures;
- make it clear at the beginning of a conversation that there are limits to confidentiality;
- inform the confider when a confidence has to be broken for the safety and well-being of children;
- pass on confidential information for the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils to the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- work in partnership parents and carers keeping them up to date with their child's progress and behaviour at school through appropriate, professional channels only;
- maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside school

Role of Pupils

Pupils will be aware:

- that they can talk about any concerns or worries they have with school personnel;
- of the confidentiality statement and that information will be shared for their own safety and well-being;
- that they will be encouraged by the school to discuss any matters that they have brought to the attention of the school with their parents/carers;
- of how to access confidential support such as Childline

Role of School Visitors (Outside Agencies, Parent Helpers and Students)

- All school visitors will be made aware of the school policy about disclosures and confidentiality through the safeguarding leaflet.
- All parent helpers are asked to sign a confidentiality agreement before working in school.
- All visitors must report any concerns they have regarding a pupil/s.
- All disclosures must be reported to the designated or deputy designated safeguarding lead.

Linked Policies

▪ Safeguarding & Child Protection	▪ Dealing with Allegations Against School Personnel
▪ Whistle Blowing	▪ Staff Behaviour Policy
▪ Relationship And Sex Education	▪ Data Protection Policy: GDPR

Confidentiality Agreement

I have read and understood Trimley St Martin School's Confidentiality Policy.
I understand that confidential information means all information obtained whether orally, in writing or by any other means.

I am in agreement that: -

- all personal information regarding pupils or school personnel is confidential and will be kept so;

- all school personnel and parental helpers will abide by a strict code of the highest professional and ethical standards in order to safeguard confidentiality of all practices and information held within the school;

- the Head teacher is responsible for taking action if a member of staff, Parent Helper or Volunteer is identified to having disclosed confidential information regarding school practices or personal information regarding a pupil or a member of the school staff;

I, (_____), am in agreement with the above and agree that I will treat all information received in the strictest confidence and will not divulge any information inappropriately or outside of the school.

Signed	Date Agreed