

December 2007

**Ringshall School**  
**Confidentiality Policy**

**Aims**

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**

Ringshall School 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 that 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. The school must be fair to all its community.

**Objectives**

1. To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children.
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 whilst making it clear that they and their parents know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
5. To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
6. To ensure that in child safeguarding issues the correct procedure is followed.
7. To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons class teachers and pupils agree ground rules for the protection of all.
8. To understand that health professionals have their own code of conduct, which includes confidentiality.
9. 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 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 relevant school staff.

3. The school actively promotes a positive ethos and respect for the individual

a) The school has appointed a senior lead teacher for child safeguarding who receives regular training. At Ringshall School it is the Headteacher, or in her absence, the Deputy Headteacher.

b) There is clear guidance for the handling of child safeguarding incidents. All staff have regular training on child safeguarding 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 the school has a behaviour and an equality policy, which are carefully followed.

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 safeguarding 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. The school shares with parents any child safeguarding disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities, as long as it is felt that sharing the information will not put the child at additional risk.

6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that only 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 about such categories is generated in schools but individual children should not be able to be identified.

8. Child safeguarding procedures are clear and understood by staff and training is undertaken regularly for all staff. Procedures are set out in the Safeguarding Children policy.

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. The school is 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 "essential information" sheet is 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. The school gives clear guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public school events such as Sports day, performances and assemblies, and has a photography policy which is carefully followed.

12. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's marks and assessments, especially at parents' evening. However parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change schools.

All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. This should be clearly understood by those who have access to it.

Personal information such as reports from speech therapy, medical staff, SEN professionals, and Social Services 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 to a receiving school. An exception is when that parent has given permission in order to be part of a telephone communication chain e.g. for emergencies.

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 are included in part 2 of the Headteacher's report. Matters in part 2 are minuted separately and minutes are not published. 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. Staff will not divulge information about a child with another child or their parents. They must be particularly sensitive to discussing issues in the staffroom in the presence of students and other visitors to the school.

15. Governors, in particular those sitting on discipline committees or involved in monitoring the schools standards of pupil achievement, will not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, pupils or parents) to anyone outside the meeting.

16. Parents in school working as volunteers in classrooms or as a member of Friends will not report details of incidents occurring in school. This allows teachers to deal with such matters in line with the school's behaviour policy. Parent helpers are advised of the importance of confidentiality, and as parents, are in any case aware of this policy.

17. Staff performance management is carried out privately, and is a matter for the reviewer and the reviewee. Targets, lesson observations and personal data must remain in school in a secure space. Only the Headteacher, Reviewer and Reviewee of staff have access to these records.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

1. The policy will be reviewed by governors as part of the school's monitoring cycle.

2. The PHSE scheme of work, Sex and Relationship Policy and Drugs Policy, will enable identified opportunities to deliver aspects of this policy in particular curriculum cycles.

### **Conclusion**

Ringshall School 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.