



## Confidentiality Policy

### At The King's (The Cathedral) School, we believe that:

- The safety, wellbeing and protection of our pupils and students are the paramount considerations in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring the wellbeing and safety of our pupils and students.
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, students, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school and to minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared, to ensure pupils, students and staff are supported and safe.
- Pupils, students, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- The school's attitude to confidentiality is open and easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- Issues concerning personal information, including sex and relationships and other personal matters, can arise at any time.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality. Everyone in the school community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health, sex and relationship or other personal issue they want to discuss.

### Definition of Confidentiality

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

*See the description of different levels of confidentiality on Page 2*

When speaking confidentially to someone, the confider has the belief that the confidante will not discuss the content of the conversation with another and 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.

*See Page 3 – Legal Position for Staff*

In practice, there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered in The King's (The Cathedral) School. We have tried to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils, students and staff; ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it; ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection procedure and good practice is followed.

Disclosure of the content of a conversation may be discussed with professional colleagues but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances, where child protection or other issues demand it.

Staff should make clear at the beginning of a conversation with another member of the school community (pupil, student or staff) that there are limits to confidentiality. These limits relate to ensuring the safety and well-being of

other individuals or groups. The individual will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason, and will be encouraged to do this for themselves 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, s/he is working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

**2. One to one disclosures 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 or 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.

When concerns for a child or young person come to the attention of staff, for example through observation of behaviour or injuries or disclosure, however insignificant this might appear to be, the member of staff should discuss this with the School's Designated Child Protection Co-ordinators 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 Child Protection Policy.)

**3. Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in the school.**

Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils provided they are competent to do so and follow the current guidelines (guidelines for doctors and other health professionals on giving medical advice to under 16s). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a pupil's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

**Contraceptive advice and pregnancy:**

The Department of Health guidance (July 2004) clarifies and confirms that health professionals owe young people under 16 the same duty of care and confidentiality as older patients. It sets out principles of good practice in providing contraception and sexual health advice to under-16s.

Whether a young person is competent to consent to treatment or is in serious danger is judged by the health professional on the circumstances of each individual case, not solely on the age of the patient. Cases of grave concern would be referred through child protection procedures. The school will ensure that it is aware of, and follows, current government guidance.

### **The legal position for school staff:**

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Pupils and students do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to his/her parents/carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this school's staff can or should give such a promise.

The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration 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 The King's School, 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 wellbeing is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with their line manager or the School's Designated Child Protection Coordinators (DCPC).

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he or she should indicate to a child whether confidence could be maintained, having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement the teacher, counsellor or health professional must consider the best interests of the child, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children and possible child protection issues.

All teachers 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 Child Protection Policy and procedures.

### **Counsellors and Health Professionals:**

At The King's School, we offer pupils the support from the Pupil Support Officers, Chaplain and the school nursing service which offers drop-in sessions. Appointments can also be made with the nurse through the Pupil Receptionist. These services are confidential between the member of staff and health professional and the individual pupil. No information is shared with school staff except as defined in the school's Child Protection Policy, guidance from the local Child Protection Committee and Child Protection law and in line with this confidentiality policy. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our pupils.

### **Visitors and non-teaching staff:**

At The King's School, we expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff, and visiting professionals, to report any disclosures of a concerning personal nature by pupils or parents/carers, to one of the Designated Child Protection Co-ordinators 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:**

The King's School believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal matter with staff, they will be encouraged also to discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves, except where circumstances dictate otherwise because the safety of the child might be compromised as a result.

## **Complex cases:**

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, a consultation will be sought by the Designated Child Protection Coordinator/s with the Local Authority Child Protection Co-ordinator.

## **When confidentiality should be broken and procedures for doing this:**

(See also the Child Protection Policy)

Where the Child Protection Policy does not apply and staff are still concerned and unsure of whether the information should be passed on or other action taken, they should discuss the matter with the Headteacher, or in his absence the Deputy Headteacher, or another member of the Senior Management Team. If the Headteacher issues instructions that he should be kept informed, all staff must comply.

## **The principles to be followed at The King's School are that in all cases:**

- Ensure the time and place for any conversation with an individual pupil, student or member of staff are appropriate.

When a meeting or conversation is requested, see the individual normally (and always in cases of suspected child neglect or abuse) before the end of the school day. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect a child is accessed as early as possible.    Tell the pupil, student, member of staff, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if it is thought they will:

- hurt themselves
- hurt someone else
- or they tell us that someone is hurting them or others

- The pupil, student or member of staff will not be interrogated or asked leading questions.
- Individuals will not be put in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people, whenever this can be avoided.
- Inform the pupil, student or member of staff first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this.
- Encourage a pupil or student whenever possible to confide in his/her own parents/carers.
- Two members of staff will be present whenever possible, and conversations with individual pupils or students will be avoided unless the matter to be discussed is obviously of a very personal and distressing nature.

## **Support for staff**

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils and students. It is preferable that staff ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because they are not in possession of all the facts or the necessary training, or keeping information to themselves which may worry and concern them. The school strives to provide a happy and safe learning and working environment for all members of its community and encourages everyone to work together as part of a team to achieve this. Members of staff should discuss any concerns about pupils and students with their curriculum area manager, line manager, the School's Designated Child Protection Coordinators, Pupil Support Officer, Pupil Development Manager, the Headteacher or any member of the Senior Leadership Team. Any unresolved issues should be discussed with the Headteacher.

## **Onward referral:**

The Pupil Support Officers, the SENCO and the School's Designated Child Protection Coordinators are responsible for referring pupils and students to the school nurse and to outside agencies from the school. Staff should not make referrals themselves unless they believe a child protection referral to the police is necessary and the designated person does not agree. ('What to do if you're worried a child is being abused', DfE Feb, HO, etc., 2003).

Pupils can also obtain confidential help themselves, from the information about drop-in centres, contact numbers and websites, which is available from pupil reception and displayed on notice boards around the school (in form rooms, toilets, health board outside Pupil Reception etc.).

**Dissemination and implementation:**

This policy has been made available to all teaching and non-teaching staff, including volunteers, at the school. All new staff, including volunteers, will have their attention drawn to the policy, together with basic training on the School's Child Protection Policy and Procedures from the Designated Child Protection Co-ordinators

The policy will be reviewed every 2 years or whenever deemed necessary by the Headteacher and Governors in the light of events and changes in the law.

**Links to other school policies and procedures:**

**This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's policies/schemes of learning on:**

Learning for Life  
Drugs Education and Incidents  
Sex and Relationships Education  
Child Protection  
Anti-Bullying