



Confidentiality Policy

May 2024

Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 16/05/24

**This Policy is due for renewal
in Term 5 2025–26**

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

OF

GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

SECTION ONE – CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

At Godinton Primary School we believe that:

- The safety, well being and protection of our pupils are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff or with outside agencies is an essential element in ensuring our pupils well being and safety.
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff, and parents to seek help both within and outside the school and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils, staff and parents are supported and safe
- Pupils, parents 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 or drugs.
- 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.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- Parents are made aware by school staff that personal information which they share with them will only be shared with other relevant school staff. Parents' permission is gained to share information of a sensitive nature with other relevant professionals.
- 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.

Relevant interested parties are consulted on the content of the policy. It forms part of the induction of all new staff, including voluntary staff and is reviewed every 2 years.

This policy is informed by the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and the references to confidentiality within this.

SECTION TWO – DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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

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

In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered at Godinton Primary School. A balance is achieved between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it and understanding that when it is essential to share personal information on child protection issues and good practice is followed. This means that in most cases absolute confidentiality is not appropriate.

In discussions of a confidential nature including matters of child protection and safeguarding, staff should make clear that there are limits to confidentiality, at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The pupil 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.

2.2 Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

A. 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 the protocols as to how any personal disclosures will be managed. Part of the ground rules might include making children aware that if they have anything of a personal nature to discuss then this could be done outside of the lesson and which adults they can talk to.

When a health professional or other visitor is contributing to PSHE or RSE lessons in a classroom setting, they should be working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher. The school's policy for Visitors should be read in conjunction with this policy as it provides further information.

B. 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.

(Note: That is, that 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead (Jillian Talbot) or one of the deputy DSLs 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.)

C. Disclosures to a counsellor, social worker, 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 Fraser 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.

Social workers will follow appropriate confidentiality procedures, as will the police.

D. The Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team will give due regard to confidentiality with all matters relating to staff and pupils within the school.

SECTION THREE – ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY WITHIN THE SCHOOL

3.1 The legal position for school staff:

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Pupils 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. Further detail is provided in the school's safeguarding policy.

The safety, wellbeing and protection of the child are 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. At Godinton Primary 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 well being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with their line manager and all safeguarding concerns should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

3.2 School Staff, Counsellors, Health Professionals and Other Professionals:

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he or she should indicate to a child that the child could make a disclosure in confidence and whether such a confidence could then 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 training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and are expected to follow the schools' child protection policy and procedures. Child protection training is given to all school staff on a regular basis thereafter – annual updates are provided and more in-depth training provided every 3 years. The school's confidentiality policy forms part of staff induction.

Confidentiality does not just apply to discussions with pupils about personal matters. Staff, visitors, or non-teaching staff should not discuss issues such as behaviour, or academic attainment with a third party unless it has been agreed by the school that this information should be professionally shared. All members of the school community should give regard to the school's policy on data protection.

Likewise, some issues surrounding school staff must also be kept confidential. Within any official meeting due regard will be given to any matters deemed to be confidential.

There will be times when staff are informed of key issues relating to the school and are informed when this information must be kept in confidence. This might include information about the school's finances or staffing structure. If the Headteacher issues instructions

that information should be kept confidential, all staff must comply. There is always a good reason for this, which staff may not know about. All staff are expected to follow the **Staff Code of Conduct Policy** which outlines their obligations to maintain confidentiality as required.

3.3 Visitors, Volunteer Helpers and non-teaching staff

At Godinton Primary School, we expect all non teaching staff, including voluntary staff, except those identified in the paragraph above, to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** 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 Safeguarding Lead** 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.

All volunteer helpers, non-teaching staff are advised as to the school's confidentiality policy as part of their induction. They are expected to follow the same conduct as school staff on matters of confidentiality.

3.4 Parents/carers

Godinton Primary School believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at school, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our pupils can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal matter staff at **Godinton Primary School**, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves. Where it is deemed appropriate, school staff will discuss with the child how they, or another adult in the school (e.g. **FLO** or **DSL**) may be able to help with this and how this could be done.

3.5 Complex cases

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, the school will seek a consultation with the local **Safeguarding Team** via the **Front Door**.

3.6 Confidentiality statement of ground rules to be used in lessons

We adopt ground rules to ensure a safe environment for teaching in particular in PSHE / SRE. This reduces anxiety to pupils and staff and minimises unconsidered, unintended personal disclosures.

Pupils are reminded of the ground rules by the teacher or outside visitor. The teacher establishes the ground rules together with the pupils at the beginning of each half term.

This is an example of the ground rules for a Year 6 class:

- We won't ask each other or the teacher any personal questions
- We will respect each other and not laugh, tease or hurt others
- We won't say things we want to keep confidential
- We can pass or opt out of something if it makes us feel uncomfortable
- If we do find out things about other pupils, which are personal and private, we won't talk about it outside the lesson
- If we do find out things about other pupils, which are personal and private, we won't talk about it outside the lesson, but
- If we are worried about someone else's safety we tell a teacher

SECTION FIVE – MANAGING DISCLOSURES

Further information is provided in the school's Child Protection Policy.

If a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff of a sensitive or safeguarding nature, the principles we follow at Godinton Primary School are that in all cases we:

- Ensure the time and place for discussion are appropriate; when they are not we reassure the child that we understand they need to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy which we will find.
- See the child normally (and always in cases of neglect, or abuse) before the end of the school day. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible.
- Tell the child we cannot guarantee confidentiality if we think they will:
 - hurt themselves
 - hurt someone else
 - or they tell us that someone is hurting them or others
- Not interrogate the child or ask leading questions
- We won't put children in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people
- Inform the pupil first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this
- Encourage the pupil, whenever possible to confide in their own parents/carers

5.2 Support for Staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils. At Godinton Primary School we encourage staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because they don't have all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about pupils home with them. We all work together as part of a team to support our pupils and asking for help is a way we ensure Godinton Primary School is a happy and safe learning environment.

Godinton Primary School teaching staff should discuss any concerns about pupils with Jill Talbot, Designated Safeguarding Lead. In her absence, staff should refer any concerns to Sarah Stein or Jacqui McGibney, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads or Hayley Collins, Assistant Headteacher.

Supervision is provided for all EYFS staff and the school's FLO. Group supervision is provided for DSLs in fortnightly DSL meetings.

5.3 Onward Referral

Mrs Sarah Stein, the Assistant Head for Inclusion is responsible for referring pupils to the outside agencies from the school, and Miss Talbot (or another DSL in the school) for Safeguarding (Child Protection) referrals. Mrs Jacqui McGibney (Family Liaison Officer) will often act as the lead professional in Early Help referrals. Staff should not make referrals themselves unless they believe a child protection referral to the police or Children's Social Services is necessary and the designated person does not agree. ('What to do if you're worried a child is being abused', DfES, HO, etc., 2015). Appropriate permissions will be gained if required for sharing data and information with outside agencies.

Confidentiality procedures relating to staff may need to be broken if another member of staff is concerned that there is a Safeguarding (Child Protection) issue or any other concern relating to staff code of conduct. The school has a whistle blowing policy which should be referred to if any staff are concerned about disclosing information about another member of staff. Please also refer to the school's policies for safer recruitment and child protection.

The school's whistleblowing policy outlines the expectation placed on all staff to inform a member of the senior management team if there is any issue relating to the behaviour of a member of staff which contravenes the standards governing their position or school policy.

SECTION SIX – DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This policy has been made available to all teaching and non-teaching staff, including volunteers, at the school.

All new staff have access to a copy of the policy, together with basic training on the school's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy and procedures from the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Volunteer helpers are made aware of the school's procedures for confidentiality.

SECTION SEVEN – CONFIDNETIALITY IN RELATION TO STAFF MATTERS

All staff have a responsibility to ensure confidentiality in regard to personal matters related to work related to their colleagues – this could include personal illness, pregnancy, employment or disciplinary matters or a change in personal circumstances. The only exception to this is any child protection concerns which should be shared with the DSL under the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

The school follows the confidentiality requirements of Section 3, Safer Recruitment of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 with regards to the process of staff recruitment.

The school follows the confidentiality requirements of KCSIE 2023 with regard to managing allegations against a person of trust.

SECTION SEVEN – LINKS TO OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's policies for:

PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education)

Drugs

Relationship and Sex Education

Child Protection (Safeguarding)

Anti-Bullying

Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusion Policy

Whistle-Blowing

Data Protection

Safer Recruitment

Children in Care

Staff Code of Conduct

All other personnel policies

SECTION EIGHT – EQUALITY STATEMENT (Refer also to specific policies for equal opportunities and racial equality)

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life.

We tackle discrimination through the positive promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us.

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

SECTION NINE – CHILDREN IN CARE

As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care (CIC) to achieve the highest standards they can. To this end staff will ensure that in delivering the curriculum they set suitable learning challenges of CIC, respond to the diverse learning needs of CIC, and help to overcome the potential barriers to learning and assessment for CIC. The school will give due regard to issues of confidentiality when addressing the needs of Children in Care within the school.

SECTION TEN – REVIEW

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