



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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ROYAL GREENWICH TRUST SCHOOL CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

STATEMENT

At Royal Greenwich Trust School with believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our students are the paramount consideration in all decisions governors and staff make about confidentiality. (The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an important element in ensuring our students' wellbeing and safety.)
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable students, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school. We aim to minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure students and staff are supported and safe.
- 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.
- The school's belief is that confidentiality should be open and easily understood with everyone able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- It is important to recognise that no one in the school community can offer absolute confidentiality.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Absolute

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 in our school. We try to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our students and staff, with the need to share personal information, as in child protection issues.

Limited

This means that in most cases what is on offer is **limited** confidentiality. Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances.

The general rule is that 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 student 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.

Classroom

In the classroom, 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 students 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.

With one to one disclosures it is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both students and parents/carers (see note below). All staff at this school should encourage students to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the student are paramount and school staff will not automatically share information about the student with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

(Note: That is, 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 (DSL) 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 Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy.)

Health professionals, such as school nurses, can give confidential medical advice to students 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 students 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.

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 Royal Greenwich Trust School, we believe it is important that staff are able to share their concerns about students 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 students' safety and well-being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with the DSL.

Students do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to his/her parent/carer and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of staff should give such a promise. All teachers at this school receive training in Child Protection and are expected to follow the school's Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy and procedures.

Visitors and non-teaching staff:

At Royal Greenwich Trust School, we expect all non-teaching staff, including volunteers and governors, to report any disclosures by students or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the DSL as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. The DSL will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

Parents/carers: Royal Greenwich Trust School believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers informed 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 students can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a student does discuss a difficult personal matter with staff they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

Support for staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our students. At Royal Greenwich Trust School we prefer you to ask for help rather than possibly make a poor decision because you don't have all the facts or the necessary training. There are many agencies we can refer students to who need additional support and we have procedures to ensure this happens. We all work together as part of a team to support our students and asking for help is a way we ensure Royal Greenwich Trust School is a happy and safe learning environment.

Royal Greenwich Trust School teaching staff should discuss any concerns about students with their Line Manager. Any unresolved issues should be discussed with the Headteacher.

Complex cases:

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, seek a consultation with the local authority Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Co-ordinator.

The principles we follow at Royal Greenwich Trust School are that in all cases we:

- Ensure the time and place 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.
- 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 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 student first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this
- Encourage the student, whenever possible to confide in his/her own parents/carers

Legal Position

It is the view of the Police that they should be informed of cases where a person under the age of 16 discloses sexual activity, which includes sexual intercourse. This is not for the purpose of prosecution, unless that course of action was appropriate, but to enable the Police to share information concerning the parties concerned. The Police are of the view that this information sharing would enable a better assessment as to whether a child was being abused or exploited.

Links to other school policies and procedures:

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with other school policies:

Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy

SRE Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Behaviour for Learning Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

Students can also obtain confidential help themselves from various support agencies ie Childline, GP, local drug and alcohol agencies, Relate etc.

Dissemination and implementation:

This policy has been circulated to all teaching and non-teaching staff, including volunteers, at the school. All new staff, including volunteers are advised of this policy, together with basic training on the school's Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy and procedures from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Review:

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