



The Blyth School

Confidentiality Policy

Aims and Objectives

This policy provides guidance and information on confidentiality procedures in the school for staff, pupils, parents/carers and governors. To be accessible to all of these groups the document needs to be available on request and presented in a way that is easy to understand.

Moral and Values Framework

The Confidentiality Policy at The Blyth School reflects the school ethos and demonstrates and encourages the following values:

- Respect for self;
- Respect for others;
- Responsibility for their own actions;
- Responsibility for their family, friends, schools and wider community.

Policy Statement

This school operates in a way that respects every individual and family's right to privacy. All our staff and visitors are therefore expected to work within the guidelines of this policy which conform to recent legislation and government guidelines and which protect confidentiality.

In practice this means:

- making it clear that gossip is discouraged
- keeping personal records of behaviour confidential
- not discussing pupil or family personal matters in a general way
- using teaching methods which protect confidentiality
- always encouraging pupils to talk to their parents or carers about any anxieties they may have, while at the same time offering support for individuals and families from staff specialising in pastoral care.

Personal Disclosures

Pupils will be made aware that some information cannot be held confidentially and made to understand that if certain disclosures are made, certain actions will ensure. At the same time, pupils will be offered sensitive and appropriate support. Procedures outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy will be adhered to by all adults upon the occasion of disclosure by a child or suspicion of possible abuse.

Confidentiality in the classroom

All teaching will be done in a way that reaffirms respect for everyone in the school and associated with it. The following strategies for maintaining confidentiality in a class situation will be used in this school:

I. Setting ground rules

Teaching staff will work with pupils to develop 'ground rules' for lessons and discussions and show why these need to be agreed and respected by everybody. For example:

- no-one – teachers or pupils – will have to answer a personal question or disclose any personal details.
- everyone has the right to ‘pass’ on a question if they want to
- no-one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- everyone has the right to be listened to and have their views respected
- no teasing or bullying of any kind
- if you don’t want anyone to know something either talk about it as though it was someone else or don’t bring it up.

2. Depersonalising

Teaching staff will protect pupils’ privacy in the class by always depersonalising discussions. Pupils can then explore the issues being raised without having their personal lives or those of their families implicated or invaded and ‘used’ inappropriately by other pupils. For example:

- use the third person to allow pupils to keep a distance (‘If you were Jamie/Sara what would you do?’ rather than ‘What would you do?’)
- collect answers anonymously on pieces of paper so that pupils can express their feelings without risking exposure
- collect group ideas without identifying individuals
- use sensitive role play to help pupils ‘act out’ situations and people they can identify within a contained and safe way (always ‘de-role’ afterwards)
- provide appropriate videos and written scenarios with invented characters to encourage pupils to imagine how the people would feel, and discuss what they would do in their shoes
- organise planned visits with theatre in education groups – they provide a vehicle for probing sensitive issues, with actors expressing the emotions which pupils may be experiencing and answering questions ‘in role’
- making sure that pupils are informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse, learning mentors, GP or local young person’s advice services.
Classroom teachers must remain aware of their terms of contract and that they cannot promise children absolute confidentiality.

Other Professionals Working in School

Students may come in contact with a number of other professionals within the school. The involvement of these professionals raises a number of confidentiality issues:

Maintaining confidentiality in a classroom

Other professionals may need some support in working with groups in a way that protects confidentiality. In a one-to-one setting it is good practice for other professionals to talk to a child personally, to make sure that their concerns are identified, and that they understand the advice they are given. In a classroom setting it is not appropriate to talk directly to individuals about their personal experiences.

Professional Codes of Conduct

Whereas teachers are bound by their terms of contract and cannot promise students absolute confidentiality, other professionals – when working with individual students – are bound by their professional codes of conduct which tend to give pupils the right to confidentiality and it would be unreasonable to expect a professional to act outside his/her professional code within a school setting. Confidentiality, in these situations, should only be breached in exceptional cases and not without first informing the child.

In a classroom situation, including small group work, the school’s policies and procedures apply to teachers and other professionals alike.

Data Protection

Confidentiality does not just relate to disclosures of information which could have legal implications such as abuse. Staff members should not handle any confidential information carelessly as pupils and other

members of staff may regard this as the norm and respond in a similar manner if a confidence is passed to them.

The following measures are in place to ensure confidential information is dealt with appropriately:

- Pupil records are kept in a locked filing cabinet. Most pupil files are retained for 6 years and then destroyed. If the records contain SEN statements or exclusion details we follow Lambeth Council's Retention Schedule guidance.
- Pupil records or reports kept in classrooms are placed in lockable filing cabinets.
- Personal pupil information is not stored in the staffroom and is not displayed on notice boards, except for health and safety notices about specific children's allergy etc. reactions.
- Discussing pupil, family or other staff members' personal matters in a general way is discouraged.

Equal Opportunities Statement

Our policy aims to respond to the diversity of children's cultures, faiths, gender, race and family backgrounds.