



## Tower Hill Primary School Confidentiality Policy

**Date** : October 2023 **Author (revised)** : Laura Ovenden  
**Date of Approval** : 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023 **Signed (GB)** : *Camilla Collins, Chair*  
**Review Date** : September 2026

### **Aim**

To ensure that all members of staff working on the school site are clear about the levels of confidentiality that they can offer to the school community and expect for themselves.

### **Objectives**

- To ensure everyone understands the various levels of confidentiality which might be offered in different circumstances.
- To ensure that the process for developing and reviewing this policy is understood by everyone.
- To ensure that pupils understand the levels of confidentiality they can expect in different circumstances.
- To be transparent about the process for developing & reviewing this policy.

### **Rationale: why the policy was developed**

It has become increasingly important for schools to have a comprehensive, clear, explicit and well-publicised Confidentiality Policy to ensure good practice throughout the school which staff (including staff from external agencies), parents and pupils can easily understand and that the levels of confidentiality that can be offered in various circumstances are clear. The school needs to be clear about the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and responsibilities; e.g. child protection issues. Different professionals can offer varying levels of confidentiality in different circumstances, which can be confusing to staff and pupils.

Sometimes parents and families may wish to disclose information confidentially to the school. Schools need to be clear about their position.

A number of DfE publications on related matters including the statutory guidance '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*' have been published.

### **How the policy was formulated**

The policy has been developed in consultation with staff, parents, pupils, governors and outside agencies. The school council was consulted about the policy and their involvement/responsibility.

### **Where and to whom the policy applies**

- All teaching/non-teaching staff employed by the school
- All visiting staff working with young people on the school site during the school day
- Depending on their contractual arrangements, staff from external agencies delivering services on the school site e.g. school counsellor and voluntary organisations
- Volunteers.

## Staff Support and Training:

- INSET training
- Induction of new staff
- Training offered by Hampshire Children's Services, eg: Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), information sharing and assessment
- Hampshire Children's Services through Service Level Agreements

## All School Staff Members; confidentiality and pupils

- All staff members must make it clear to pupils **that unconditional confidentiality cannot be offered** when a pupil first begins to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue.
- Pupils should be informed that where there is a Child Protection issue where the pupil or others may be at risk of significant harm, you are under a duty to inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (*1. Christine Cartlidge SENCo 2. Laura Ovenden Headteacher 3. Nicola Ward DHT 4. Kieran Collins AHT 5. Gail Meaney FSLW 6. Emma Dinsdale AHT*, who may have to inform other agencies (please refer to the school **Safeguarding** and **Child Protection Policies** for further advice).
- Where it is felt that it is necessary to break confidentiality with the pupil, the pupil must be informed and reassured that their best interests will be maintained.
- We recognise that there are occasions when pupils are worried about something and feel that they cannot talk about it to their parents/ carers.
- This can result in enormous stress for the individual which impacts on their education and health. Some pupils may feel that they can turn to teachers and other staff members for support and we want to be as helpful as we can whilst recognising that there may be some potential difficulties in being supportive. You should adhere to the following policy:
  - When talking with pupils, it is important for you to be aware of maintaining your professional boundaries. Whilst being supportive where you can, distancing techniques should be used when appropriate and pupils encouraged or supported to access the confidential services offered on the school site.
  - **You must be clear to pupils that you cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when a pupil first begins to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue.**
  - Pupils should be warned that if there is a child protection issue where the pupil, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, **you are under a duty to inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead who may have to involve other agencies.** (Please refer to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures for further advice on this aspect.)
  - It is important that each member of staff deals with this sensitively and explains to the pupil that they must inform the appropriate people who can help the child, but that they will only tell those who need to know in order to help.

- In talking with pupils, staff should encourage them to talk to their parents/carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate.
- Pupils should be made aware of the specialist confidential services that are available at Tower Hill or in the school community e.g. the school counsellor, our ELSA, the Family School Link Worker.

### **Peer Support and Mentoring Projects: Confidentiality between Pupils**

Occasionally, pupils may be given the opportunity to participate in peer mentoring. Pupils are not allowed to promise to keep secrets but all conversations between the mentor and person being mentored will be kept confidential except in the following circumstances:

- The mentor must tell either the mentoring co-ordinator or a teacher if a pupil discloses either any form of abuse or anything else that would make them worry about their safety. If the pupil being mentored is about to disclose this sort of information, the mentor must tell them that they will need to take them to a member of staff, possibly as an advocate to help them.
- If the mentor has a concern about the content of a mentoring meeting, they are encouraged to discuss it with the mentoring co-ordinator - it will not go further unless it fits into one of the above categories.
- The above must be made clear to the mentor by a member of staff at the outset.

### **The School Counsellor/Welfare Officer**

- The school counsellor (*employee of The Valley Trust*) can be approached by any pupil for a confidential discussion. Sometimes the school may also refer pupils to the counsellor for discussions.
- The school Counsellor **cannot offer confidentiality over Child Protection issues**. Sometimes it is necessary for a pupil to be able to talk about deep-seated troubling issues in order to help the pupil through their situation.
- **We do not require our counsellor to inform senior or pastoral staff about illegal activities unless there is a child protection issue or other significant risk.**

### **Parents and Families**

- There may be occasions when family issues arise which might affect a pupil.
- The wishes of the family will be respected and, where it is felt necessary to share this information, will do so after discussions with the parents/carers unless there is considered to be an immediate risk to the pupil or there is an overriding Child Protection issue.

### **Staff and Governors**

All staff and governors can expect that their personal situations and health issues will remain confidential unless:

- It impinges on their terms of contract
- Endangers pupils or other staff members
- There is a legal obligation to disclose information
- It is necessary for legal proceedings
- Despite the duty of confidentiality, the staff member's interest or the wider public interest justifies disclosure.
- Staff & governors must be made aware of the intention to disclose a confidence.

**Linked policies**

- Behaviour (inc Anti-Bullying)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection (abuse)
- Health and Safety
- PSHE/SRE

**Dissemination**

This policy should be publicised to all in the school community:

- Through the school prospectus
- On the school website
- Via School Council
- By emphasising links with other policies such as Behaviour (inc Anti-Bullying), Safeguarding and Child Protection (Abuse)