



## Confidentiality Policy

### 1.0 Rationale and statement on the importance of confidentiality

At Loughton 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 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, parents/carers 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 governors are supported and safe
- Pupils, parents/carers staff and governors 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.
- The school has a duty to protect children from harm. The decision to share information is decided on a case by case basis.
- Only specific, timely & relevant information can be shared in order to keep a child safe.
- 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.

### 1.1 Scope of Policy

The policy applies to all members of staff, governors and temporary/casual workers of the school including volunteers and commissioned services.

## 2.0 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 in Loughton School. We have tried to strike a balance 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 ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information and ensure good practice is followed.

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 wellbeing. 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 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. (See Setting Ground Rules section 8, and Working Agreements).

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.

b) **One to one** disclosures to members of **school staff (including governors and 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, 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 Safeguarding Policy.)

- c) Disclosures to a school nurse or health professional operating 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 unless it places the child at risk of harm.

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

School 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.

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 Loughton 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 or the DSL or Safeguarding Team.

### **4.0 Teachers and health 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 basic training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and are expected to follow the schools' child protection policy and procedures.

#### **5.0 Visitors and voluntary helpers:**

At Loughton School, we expect all voluntary helpers, except those identified in the paragraph above, to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the designated child protection co-ordinator 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 voluntary helpers/visitors who are in regular contact with children will read guidelines and information to ensure they act appropriately to ensure the safety of children and themselves. They will sign to confirm they understand and agree what to do when a disclosure is made (See Appendix 1).

#### **6.0 Parents/carers:**

Loughton 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 with staff at Loughton School, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

The safety, well being and protection of our pupils is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

#### **7.0 Complex cases:**

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, seek a consultation with Milton Keynes Local Authority MASH team or LADO.

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

**This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's**

|                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| PSHCE                           | Bullying              |
| Drugs                           | Behaviour             |
| Sex and Relationship            | Whistle-Blowing       |
| Child Protection & Safeguarding | Looked After Children |

#### **8.0 Statement of ground rules to be used in lessons**

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

At the beginning of each PSHCE lesson and Circle time, 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 of teaching PSHCE and Circle time.

- 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

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

See the Child Protection Policy

Where this does not apply and you are still concerned and unsure of whether the information should be passed on or other action taken you should speak to the Head teacher.

**If the Head teacher issues instructions that s/he should be kept informed, all staff must comply. There is always a good reason for this, which you may not know about.**

**The principles we follow at Loughton School are that in all cases we:**

- Try and remain calm, accept what the child is telling you without showing shock or disgust.
- Ensure the time and place are appropriate, however be aware that the child has had to build up the courage to tell you what has happened.
- Do not delay, if at all possible, take the opportunity given by the child. When there is no ability to talk to the child immediately, 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) as soon as possible. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible.
- Reassure the child that you believe them and explain that you will have to pass it on to the DSL. Let them come with you to talk to DSL if they wish to.
- 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
  - If another child is at risk of harm
  - If it involves a staff member.
- 
- Do not interrogate the child or ask leading questions. Use open questions such as: What?, When?, Where? Who?
  - 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 his/her own parents/carers (if it is safe to do so)
  - Do not ask child to write down what has happened
  - Do not delay in talking to DSL
  - Record exactly what was said as soon after the disclosure as possible.
  - Do not write whilst the child is telling you, they deserve your full attention

## **10.0 Support for staff**

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils. At Loughton School we prefer you to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because you don't have all the facts or the necessary training. We encourage staff not to take worries about pupils home with them. There are many agencies to which we can refer pupils 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 pupils and asking for help is a way we ensure Loughton School is a happy, caring and safe learning environment.

All teaching and support staff should discuss any concerns about pupils with the DSL.

Any concerns about the DSL should be discussed with the Headteacher

Any unresolved issues or issues with the Headteacher should be discussed with the chair of governors.

## **11.0 Onward referral:**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is likely to have a more complete safeguarding picture for the school, and is responsible for referring pupils to outside agencies from the school. All referrals should be made through the DSL unless you believe a child protection referral to Milton Keynes Local Authority MASH team is necessary and the designated person does not agree.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 requires all staff to be confident in how to make a referral and the part they may play within the referral and assessment process.

- The DSL is required to be aware and follow up on any referral made from the school.

- All staff should be confident in how to make a referral, but referrals must still be notified to the DSL so they can follow up on the outcomes for individual children.
- All referrals should be through the DSL unless there are exceptional reasons
- The policy in this school is that all referrals should go **via the DSL** unless there is no one from the safeguarding team available or you disagree with a decision not to make a referral.

### **IN ALL CASES THE DSL MUST BE MADE AWARE OF THE REFERRAL**

Pupils can also obtain confidential help themselves. See the information available from a variety of support agencies/professionals eg: school staff, GP, Relateen, Childline, etc.

#### **12.0 Dissemination and implementation:**

This policy will be read by all staff and they will be asked to sign a declaration form confirming they have read and understood this policy.

The school will ensure that all staff receive training on the content and practical applications of the policy.

All volunteers, who are subject to a DBS check will be asked to sign The Guidance for Parents and Visitors Working with Children (see Appendix 1) and are strongly recommended to read this policy and the Safeguarding policy.

All new staff will receive basic training on Child Protection and Safeguarding every two years and an annual update,.

#### **Review:**

This policy is reviewed every 4 years or whenever deemed necessary by the Headteacher and Governors in the light of events and changes in the law.

## LOUGHTON SCHOOL

### GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS & VISITORS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Thank you for offering to help in school. I am sure the staff and children will benefit greatly from your assistance.

As you are working in our school I must draw to your attention the following:-

1. Medical Conditions

Please report to the Business Manager any medical condition you may have that might require a response during your time with us. This will enable the school to take appropriate action if required to.

Identification lanyards

You are required to wear your identification lanyard at all times, when you are on school premises.

1. Evacuation of the building in case of an emergency

It is essential that you sign in and out at reception when you are helping in school so that we always know who is on the premises. If you hear the alarm, please evacuate the building immediately with the children and teacher you are working with. If you are not working with children, exit with the rest of the school at the nearest possible exit and report to the office staff on the top playground where a register will be taken.

2. Safeguarding Children

The children are taught that adults helping in school will wear Loughton School badges in order to identify them.

If a child should tell you anything which causes you concern, tell the teacher you are working with. Reassure the child if the information is sensitive but do not make promises you cannot keep. Do not ask any follow up questions, but inform the teacher or head teacher of your concern. It is strongly recommended that you read our policies on Confidentiality & Safeguarding which are available to view on the school website.

3. Confidentiality

When working in a school you may be exposed to sensitive information about staff and children. Please treat this information in confidence.

4. **Use of Mobile Phones**

Please do not use your mobile phone whilst on site, Photos should never be taken by visitors or volunteers using personal phones or cameras.

5. **Code of Conduct**

All volunteers will be required to sign Loughton Schools code of conduct when working with children.

6. Whilst working or volunteering with Loughton School, we expect you to uphold the values and ethos of the school. The children will look to you as a role model, please help us to maintain positive models for our children,

Thank you once again for your help and support.

I have read and agree to follow the guidance.

Not working to this guidance may result in a volunteer being unable to work within the school. As a school safeguarding is high priority , we want to keep every child safe. We take any breach of these guidelines very seriously.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_