

# Confidentiality Policy

St Martin's School



**Reviewed by:** Kerri Male

**Last reviewed on:** October 2024

**Next review due by:** October 2025

**Approved by:** Tim Shenton

## Statement

At St Martin's School, we understand that issues concerning personal information and other personal matters can arise at any time. We believe that children's safety, well-being and protection should always be the primary focus and most important consideration in all decisions staff make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between staff and professionals is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' well-being and safety. Furthermore, it is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek help, both within and outside the school, in order to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe. Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality so that they feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues, although everyone in the school community should be aware that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.

## Aims

The primary aim of this policy is to ensure the safety, wellbeing and protection of our pupils and staff.

This policy also aims to:

- Ensure that the school's attitude to confidentiality is easily understood and that there is trust in the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- Allow children and adults in school to enjoy privacy and confidentiality.
- Enable the school to be fair to all its community.

## Rationale

At St Martin's School, we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are the paramount considerations in all decisions staff make about confidentiality.
- The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' wellbeing and safety.
- Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- 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.

## Guidelines

Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs. 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 circumstances where absolute confidentiality can be offered in a school. We strive 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, child protection procedures and good practice are followed. This means that in most cases what is offered is limited confidentiality.

Against this background, we adhere to the following guidelines:

- Staff will not discuss details of individual cases arising in staff meetings to any person without a direct professional connection to and interest in the welfare and education of the individual concerned.

- Staff will not enter into detailed discussions about a particular child's behaviour with other children or other parents/carers.
- Proprietors will not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of the Proprietorial meeting.
- Parents in school who are working as volunteers in the office, classrooms, or as part of the PTA will not report behaviour/discipline matters to other parents. This allows the teachers to deal with such cases in line with school policy and on occasions to allow children to put the matter right without the direct involvement of their parents.
- When volunteers such as reading helpers or PTA members are working in classes, they will not discuss matters outside of the classroom.
- Staff performance management will be carried out privately. Targets for individuals, named lesson observation sheets and other performance data will be securely stored in the Headteacher's office. A copy may also be held by the person to whom the information pertains.
- Matters of Child Protection are made known to staff on a need-to-know basis.
- It is important that class teachers and support staff are aware of some confidential matters in order to support individuals. These staff will respect the sensitivity of such cases and not divulge information to people who are not professionally connected to the individual concerned.
- Where it is deemed that discussing an individual case with a class or group will support the inclusion of that child, permission will be sought from the child and his/her parents or carers prior to any such discussions taking place.
- All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs.

## **Staff**

All staff can normally expect that personal circumstances and any information surrounding their health will remain confidential, unless:

- it impinges on their terms of contract,
- it endangers pupils or other members of staff,
- there is a legal obligation to disclose such information,
- it is necessary for legal proceedings *or*
- despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or the wider public interest justifies disclosure.