

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Rationale and statement on the importance of confidentiality

We believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our young learners are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at Sharpe Academy make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our young learners' well-being and safety.
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our Academy that trust is established to enable young learners, parents/carers and staff to seek help both within and outside the Academy and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure young learners and/or staff are supported and safe.
- Young learners, parents/carers and staff 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 Academy'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 within the Academy community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- Everyone within the Academy community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the Academy 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.

Definition of Confidentiality

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 within Sharpe Academy. However, we have tried to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well being and protection of our young learners and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where young learners and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that, when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and 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, at the beginning of the conversation, that there are limits to confidentiality. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being.

The young learner 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.

1. In the classroom, during 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 young learners that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential, personal information.
2. One-to-one disclosures to members of Academy staff (including voluntary staff). It is essential that all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both young learners and parents/carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the young learner or parent/carer and for the staff member within the Academy and from other agencies, where appropriate. **All staff at this academy encourage young learners to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the young learner are paramount and school staff will not automatically share information about the young learner with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.**

A conversation may start with the following advice:

"You will be supported with any problems you may share with me but if, in my opinion, you have been or are at risk from yourself (self harm) or from others or are involved in anything illegal we may have to share this information with others who can help."

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 Child Protection Co-ordinator 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 Sharpe Academy Child Protection Policy.

3. Disclosures to a counsellor, Academy nurse or health professional operating a confidential service within the Academy.

Health professionals such as nurses can give confidential medical advice to young learners 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). Academy nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage young learners to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the young learner are paramount and the Academy nurse will not insist that a young learner's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

The legal position for Academy staff

Academy staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Young learners 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 Academy's staff can or should make such a promise.