



# **ST.THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **Confidentiality Policy**

### **Our Mission Statement**

We are a Roman Catholic Community committed to:

- Mutual respect, positive encouragement and participation
- Recognizing the different personal and educational needs of all pupils
- The delivery of the full national curriculum together with a religious education syllabus approved by the Catholic Church
- The highest standards of teaching, learning and performance
- Maintaining a supportive partnership with parents, the parish and the wider community
- The professional development of the staff

### **Rationale and Statement on the Importance of Confidentiality.**

Working at St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School necessarily means having access in a variety of ways to information that must be regarded as confidential. Therefore, this policy applies to **all** staff employed by the school, including temporary, voluntary and agency staff. It also applies to governors, volunteers, visitors on work experience placements and parent helpers.

Within the course of daily operation, information related to the school, or those connected to the school, may be requested by, or supplied by, or passed to a range of people. Great care will be taken to ensure that such information will be handled in line with General Data Protection Regulation 2018

At St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils must be paramount in all decisions made by the staff at this school in regard to 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 and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school and to minimize the number of situations when personal information is shared in order to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- Pupils, parent/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns.
- Everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.



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- 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 personal issue they want to discuss.

This policy has been agreed by the Governing Body and is available to all stakeholders on our website. It forms part of the induction of all new staff, including voluntary staff, students and is reviewed annually.

### **Equal Opportunities**

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is committed towards equal opportunities in all aspects of school life.

### **All adults working in our school:**

- Must implement the Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.
- Encourage children to be open with their parents/guardians.
- Must maintain professional standards of confidentiality about anything seen or heard within school.
- Should adhere to and enforce the school's procedures for the taking of and use of photographs and video recordings in school.
- No child's personal details will be given out over the telephone until the validity of the request has been ascertained via a returned call.
- Unconditional confidentiality should never be promised.
- If an adult receives external information that leads them to believe there is a child protection issue, they must refer the information to the DSL.
- Adults must be sensitive when discussing an individual child's behaviour in the presence of another child.
- No adult should enter into detailed discussion about a child's behaviour or academic progress with other children or their parents.
- Must adhere to all school policies and procedures with regards to e-safety, use of computers and social networking.



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### **Information that is regarded as confidential can relate to:**

A variety of people e.g

- pupils
- parents/guardians
- staff/colleagues
- governors
- job applicants

A variety of matters e.g

- home addresses and telephone numbers
- conduct and performance
- health/medical
- pay and contracts
- references
- internal minutes, memos etc.
- confidential budgetary or policy information
- other personal information

These lists are not exhaustive but will extend to cover any other information of a sensitive nature relating to employees, pupils and others connected with the school and to the work of the school itself.

### **The form confidential information can take:**

Confidential information can take various forms and be held and be held and transmitted in a variety of ways e.g

- manual records (files)
- computerised records, disks and memory sticks
- written reports/minutes/agendas/file notes



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- letters/messages
- telephone calls
- face to face
- fax
- email
- internet/intranet

### **Responsibility of individuals in possession of sensitive information**

All information received in the course of employment, no matter how it is received, should be regarded as sensitive and confidential. While it is often necessary to share such information, in doing so, employees should consider the following key points.

1. The nature of the information:
  - how sensitive is it?
  - how did it come to your attention?
2. The appropriate audience:
  - who does the information need to be shared with?
  - for what purpose?
  - who is the information being copied to? Why?
  - does restriction of access need to be passed on to your audience?
3. The most appropriate method of communication:
  - verbal
  - written
  - fax
  - Email
  - in person



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4. The potential consequences of inappropriate communication.

It is also an individual employee's responsibility to safeguard sensitive information in their possession.

### **Particular responsibilities**

Sensitive information should be kept secure:

- Filing cabinets should be locked when unattended
- Child protection information is kept in a separate, secure filing cabinet.
- Sensitive information should not be left on desks or on the photocopier/printer.
- Papers should not be left lying around at home or in the car. If confidential materials or paperwork are taken out of school, this must be recorded and precautions must be taken to ensure that they are not accessible to third parties.
- If it is necessary to supply personal files through the external mail, this must be sent by recorded delivery.
- Copies of emails should be stored securely.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that private/confidential telephone calls are not overheard.
- Confidential paperwork should be disposed of by shredding.
- Personal data should not be used for training or demonstration purposes.

### **Computer data should not be left exposed to other's view when unattended**

- Screen savers should be used when computers are unattended.
- Machines should be switched off over night.

### **Computer files should be kept securely**

- Passwords must be used and these should not be disclosed to colleagues unless absolutely necessary.
- Passwords should be changed periodically (at least every six months).
- Sensitive data should not be stored on public folders.
- Staff should use the school email service for all school related emails.



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- Access to individual's computers should be restricted.
- Any users IDs and passwords should remain confidential.
- All work carried out on a computer should be stored safely.
- Computer files should be backed up regularly and not solely saved to the hard disk.

### **Confidential post. As a general rule:**

- Post marked 'personal', 'for the attention of the addressee only', 'private and/or 'confidential' should only be opened by the addressee personally.

### **Potential recipients of information**

Within the course of daily operation, information related to the school, or those connected to the school, may be requested by, or supplied by, or passed to a range of people. Great care must be taken by both the recipient and the supplier of information to ensure that it is dealt with in line with GDPR guidelines.

### **Governor's Meetings**

- Governors, in particular those sitting on discipline committees, will not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of the meeting.
- Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, children or parents/guardians.
- Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be confidential.

### **Information held about children**

- Information about children will be shared with parents/guardians but only about their own child.
- Parents/guardians will not have access to any other child's marks and progress grades at any time. However, parents/guardians should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school, if and when they change school.
- All personal information about children, including Social Services records are regarded as confidential. The Headteacher/DSL will decide who will have access, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only selected information.
- Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEND reports, SEND minutes of meetings etc. will be kept securely.



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### **Limits of Confidentiality**

When speaking confidentially to someone, the confider has the belief that the confidant will not discuss the content of the conversation with another and that it will 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.

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, child protection issues and good practice is followed.

This means that in most cases there 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 well being. Likewise, confidentiality may have to be broken if an adult is at risk to themselves or others.**

### **Levels of confidentiality**

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

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. Pupils should be made aware that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential, personal information but that a member of staff will be available to talk to them later if necessary. 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.

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of confidentiality they can offer to pupils and parents/carers if one to one disclosures are made to members of school staff (including voluntary staff).

They also need to be aware of any required actions or sources of further support or help available within the school and, where appropriate, from other agencies.

All staff at the 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.

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



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intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible. (Refer to the Child Protection Policy).

### **Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in the school.**

Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils following the Frazer 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 aware of 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 they give.

### **Disclosures to Teachers and Health Professionals**

The teacher or health professional needs to exercise professional judgement when a child makes a disclosure in confidence and whether such a confidence could then be maintained having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement the teacher or health professional must consider the best interests of the child, including the need to ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children as well as possible child protection issues.

All teachers at this school receive regular training in child protection and are expected to follow the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of the pupils. They should discuss any concerns about pupils with the Head teacher/DSL.

### **Disclosures to Visitors and Non-teaching Staff**

At St Thomas of Canterbury, we expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff (except those identified in the paragraph above) to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers that cause concern to the DSL 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 DSL 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 or visitor also gets the support and supervision they need.

### **Disclosures to Parents/Carers**

At St Thomas' we believe that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers informed of their child's progress at school, including any concerns about behaviour we may have. 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 a member of staff they will be encouraged to discuss the matter with their parent or carer if appropriate.



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### **The Legal Position for School Staff**

No members of this school's staff (including non-teaching and voluntary helpers) can or should promise complete confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to their parents/carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. 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 St Thomas' 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 that the pupils' safety and well being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with the DSL.

### **Statement of Ground Rules to be Used in Lessons**

The teacher and other members of staff establish ground rules with the pupils at the beginning of each term. The ground rules are to ensure a safe environment for teaching, in particular in PSHE and Circle Time. This reduces anxiety to pupils and staff and minimises unconsidered, unintended personal disclosures.

At the beginning of each PSHE lesson and Circle Time session, pupils are reminded of the ground rules by the member of staff.

Examples of ground rules:

- 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 of the lesson
- If we are worried about someone else's safety we tell a teacher

No adult should put pressure on children to disclose personal information. All adults will remind children that some information they share in the classroom may need to be shared with other adults **for their protection**. If information has to be shared, they will be informed first and then supported appropriately. If a child and his/her parent/carer wish to highlight an issue to a peer group e.g bereavement, then this will be carried out sensitively.



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### **Talking to Children**

When talking to children we will:

- Ensure the time and place are appropriate. When they are not, the child should be reassured that we understand they need to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy. The child should normally be seen (always in cases of neglect, or abuse) before the end of the school day. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible.
- Tell the child we cannot guarantee confidentiality if we think they will:
  - Hurt themselves
  - Hurt someone else
  - Tell us that someone is hurting them or others
- Not interrogate the child or ask leading questions.
- Not put children in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people.
- Inform the pupil first before any confidential information is shared and the reasons for this.
- Encourage the pupil, whenever possible, to confide in his/her own parents/carers.

### **Other responsibilities**

- Employees should have regard to potential difficulties which may arise as a result of discussions outside work. While it is natural (and indeed therapeutic) to talk about work at home or socially, staff should be cautious about discussing sensitive matters and should take steps to ensure that information is not passed on.
- Personal (e.g home addresses and telephone numbers) and work-related information (e.g salary details, medical details) relating to individuals, should not be disclosed to third parties except where the individual has given their express permission.
- The Headteacher should comply with the procedures for the storage and sharing of information relating to individuals' Performance Management Appraisal Reviews.
- Personal and case files should not normally be shared with third parties other than the Deputy/Assistant Headteacher and those responsible for writing references. Exceptions may apply in the case of legal proceedings.

Employees should use their discretion in these matters and if in doubt, should seek advice from the Headteacher.



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### **The consequences of revealing confidential information without authority**

Staff should ensure that they are familiar with this Confidentiality Policy and related Policies. There is an expectation that staff will use their professional discretion in applying the Policy, they should always seek advice from the Headteacher where they are unsure.

**Staff should be aware that serious breaches of the Policy may result in disciplinary action being taken. The severity of the sanction will be assessed with regard to the potential harm the disclosure will have caused to the individual concerned. Some breaches of confidentiality could be regarded as potential serious or gross misconduct that could result in dismissal.**

### **This Policy was written with regard to:**

Human Rights Act 1998

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Children's Act 2004

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016

Frazer Guidelines

GDPR 2018

### **It should be read in conjunction with the following policies:**

Data Protection

GDPR Guidelines

Child Protection/Safeguarding

Equal Opportunities

SEN

Whistleblowing

Online Safety

IT

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016

### **Policy Review Date**

This policy was reviewed in April 2018 by the Headteacher and will be reviewed annually in the light of events and changes in the law. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored throughout the year in consultation with the governor with responsibility for Safeguarding.

Review date: April 2024