



Confidentiality Policy

Principles

At Endon High School we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are the paramount considerations 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 and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school.
- Pupils, parents/carers, governors and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- The school's attitude to confidentiality is 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.
- 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, safeguarding or other personal issue they want to discuss.

Policy Development

Consultation has taken place with the whole school community, including our partner agencies. The final policy was agreed by the leadership team and the school's governing body, and has been widely disseminated to staff, pupils, parents/carers, governors and partner agencies. The policy is disseminated to all new staff joining the school.

Definition of Confidentiality

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 is offered in our 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 issues and good practice are followed, in accordance with our safeguarding procedures.

This means that in most cases what is offered 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.

Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The pupil will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in the information sharing.

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances:

1. **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. When a health professional is contributing to a school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.
2. **One-to-one disclosures to members of school staff.** It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents and carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the pupil or parent/carer, within the school and from other agencies where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage pupils to discuss different issues with their parents or carers and vice versa. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the 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.
3. **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 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.

Contraceptive advice and pregnancy

The Department of Health has issued guidance (July 2004) which clarifies and confirms that health professionals owe young people under 16 the same duty of care and confidentiality as older patients. It sets out principles of good practice in providing contraception and sexual health to under-16s. The duty of care and confidentiality applies to all under-16s. Whether a young person is competent to consent to treatment or is in serious danger is judged by the health professional on the circumstances of each individual case, not solely on the age of the patient.

However, the younger the patient the greater the concern that they may be being abused or exploited. The Guidance makes it clear that health professionals must make time to explore whether there may be coercion or abuse. Cases of grave concern should be referred through child protection procedures.

The Legal Position for School Staff

School staff should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents or 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 are 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 Endon High School we believe it is important that staff are able to share their concerns about pupils' safety and feel assured that well-being is maintained.

Teachers, counsellors and health professionals

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he/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 staff at this school receive regular (every three years) training in safeguarding and are expected to follow the school's child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures.

Counsellors and health professionals

At Endon High School we offer pupils the support of an in-house Mentor and we have access to external mentors/counsellors through a variety of support agencies. The school nursing service also operates a drop-in service for pupils.

These services are confidential between the counsellor or health professional and the individual pupil. No information is shared with school staff except as defined in the school's child protection and safeguarding policies. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our pupils.

Visitors and support staff

At Endon High School we expect all support staff to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers of a concerning nature to the designated teacher for safeguarding as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot over hear. The designated teacher for safeguarding will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken.

Parents/carers

Endon High 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 issue with school staff they will be encouraged also (if appropriate in the circumstances) to discuss the matter with their parents or carers and may be supported to do so.

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

Complex Cases

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, Endon High School will consult with the Local Authority officers with specific knowledge of this aspect.

When confidentiality should be broken and the procedures for doing so

See the school's Child Protection Policy.

The school Designated Teacher for Safeguarding is Tracey Hill, with Andrew Skelding as Assistant.

Support for Staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils. At Endon High School we prefer staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because they lack all the facts or the necessary training, or they risk taking worries about pupils home with them.

Staff should discuss any concerns with the Headteacher or one of the Leadership Team

Links with other policies

This policy has links with the following school policies:

- Child Protection
- PSHE (Personal Development)
- Sex and Relationships
- Drugs Education
- Bullying
- Social Inclusion
- Inclusion of those with Physical Disability
- Pastoral Care
- Pupils with Medical Needs

Dissemination and Implementation

This policy has been distributed to all staff as part of whole school training on Child Protection/Safeguarding. A copy of the policy can always be found in the Policies File in the staff room or on the school's intranet. All new staff receive a copy of the policy when they join the school.

Ratified by Governors September 2015

To be reviewed every 3 years – next review October 2018