"Achieving The Best For All"

Confidentiality Policy

Name of Headteacher:	**Tom Johnston**
Date Policy approved and adopted:	**Sept 2026**
Date Due for review:	**Sept 2029**

Equality at Merdon Junior School

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school. (See Initial Equality Impact Assessment)

Confidentiality Policy

Scope of policy:
This policy applies to confidential information which may be through discussion with pupils and/or staff which is of a safeguarding nature and therefore confidentiality may not be able to be offered.

General
This policy is intended to ensure that all members of the school community are aware of and are clear about the levels of confidentiality they offer to others and can expect themselves. We respect and value the individuals who work and learn at our school. We wish for all persons to be treated appropriately, with sensitivity and with the care and safety of the individual a priority.

Our Confidentiality Policy will enhance children's learning and personal development through:

- Taking the appropriate action to safeguard and protect children.
- Consistency in the handling of information about children from our staff, visitors and other professionals.
- The fostering of an ethos of trust and respect. - Equality of provision and access for all.

It is becoming increasingly important for schools to have a comprehensive confidentiality policy which gives clarity to parents/carers, pupils and staff about levels of confidentiality that can be offered in different circumstances. This policy is designed to create protection for all in the school community and also to benefit all members of both schools. A clear, explicit and well publicised confidentiality policy ensures good practice throughout the school which staff, (including staff from external agencies), governors, parents/carers and pupils can easily understand. Sometimes parents/carers and families may wish to disclose information confidentially to the school and we need to be clear about our position in different circumstances.

The Principles
There is increasing national concern for the emotional health and well-being of young people growing up in today's society. We recognise that parents and carers want to do all they can to support their child, but even in the most supportive of relationships, where there is excellent communication between parent/carer and child, there can be occasions when they are worried about something and feel that they cannot talk about it with parents. This may result in enormous stress for the pupil which can impact on their education, health and behaviour, unfortunately self-harm and even suicide in the most extreme cases.

Whilst we recognise that parents and carers will naturally be disappointed if their child does not choose to talk with them about what is troubling them, we feel there could be even more distress if the pupil is unable to cope with the issue themselves. On this basis we have agreed the following:

- Our staff will be supportive to pupils who approach them with concerns, but will make it clear that they cannot offer confidentiality to the pupil on anything that involves an illegal activity or anything that is a potential child protection/safeguarding issue where the pupil or others are likely to be at risk of significant harm.

- The Headteacher, or the most senior member of staff, will liaise with parents/carers as appropriate, or with Children's Services, in cases where a staff member has reported an issue over which they cannot offer confidentiality.

- Staff will support pupils to inform their parents/carers about issues that are troubling them as appropriate.

- We will make pupils aware of specialist confidential services in the community where they can seek assistance if they wish.

- When adults disclose confidential information, the same principles will apply

Confidentiality of Pupil Information

Any discussions with regards pupils should be of a professional nature and should only be held in areas of the school where confidentiality and privacy can be guaranteed.

Corridors or open spaces where parents or other pupils may hear confidential information are not appropriate at most points of the day. The staff room is occasionally used by external visitors and students, and therefore permanent members of staff should consider this factor before embarking on any discussion about pupils. In some circumstances only, certain members of staff who work closely with a pupil will be made aware of confidential details from external agencies. This information must not be shared with any other member of staff, due to the sensitivity of some situations. Some information when appropriate will be passed onto a receiving teacher, for example when a pupil moves from one class to another.

Procedures for Staff, Pupils, Governors, Volunteers and Families

If children or adults share information with you it is important that you are helpful and provide a listening ear. However, there are certain clear guidelines that you should adhere to. The following procedures will describe the majority of circumstances or forms of information that you are likely to encounter. They do not follow in process order and will not all be appropriate in each situation.

- Staff should be aware of professional boundaries. Distancing techniques should be used when appropriate and children encouraged or supported to access the confidential services available within the school, Local Authority and nationally.

- Staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality and must make this clear to children when they begin to talk about something where confidentiality may become an issue.

- All staff must be mindful of the need for open and transparent conversations with pupils to protect themselves. Always ensure discussions with pupils are held in rooms where other members of staff can see you. Ensure where possible that the conversation can remain confidential to the pupil without compromising transparency, for example leave a door slightly open, and ensure you are in a room with a glass window section.

- You must be clear to pupils or adults that you cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when they first begin to talk. This must be made explicit, especially during Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) lessons, where children may choose to discuss confidential matters.

- Pupils should be warned that if there is a child protection/ safeguarding issue where the pupils, or others, are likely to be at risk of significant harm, you are under a duty to inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead who may have to involve other agencies. It is important that each member of staff deals with this sensitively and explains to the pupil that they must inform the appropriate people who can help the child, but that they will only tell those who need to know in order to help.

- School staff can only offer confidentiality to pupils on issues that do not involve illegal activities e.g. drug trafficking, arson, etc. If the conversation begins to move to this kind of issue, the pupil must be warned that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

- In all cases where staff feel that they may have to break confidentiality with the pupil, the staff member must inform the pupil, and reassure them that their best interests will be maintained.

- In talking with pupils, a staff member may need to encourage them to talk to their parents/carers about the issue that may be troubling them and support in doing this should be offered where appropriate.

- Pupils should be made aware of the specialist confidential services that may be available in the school and the community e.g. Child Line, a School Nurse, doctor or young people's drop-in service. (The requirement to offer a

confidential service is within the professional Code of Practice for school nurses and other health service staff.)

- We recognise that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a pupil and which the family will only disclose to us if they can be sure the information will be treated confidentially. We will respect the wishes of the family and where it is felt necessary to share the information given to us, this will be discussed with the parents/carers first unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection/ safeguarding concern.

- Personal, medical, SEN and children's services information about children should be held in a secure location.

- Volunteers are advised to follow the procedures above, but share immediately with the class teacher should a child choose to share information relating to a worry or concern.

We do not believe that there are any matters of confidentiality affecting children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) which are not covered in the procedures above.

Health Professionals (School Nurse Team)

Health services can offer confidential health services to pupils under the age of 16, providing they follow the Fraser Guidelines which require:

- The young person understands the advice and has sufficient maturity to appreciate what is involved in terms of moral, legal, social and emotional implications for themselves.

- They cannot be persuaded to tell their parent, or allow them to be informed.

- The young person's physical or mental health is likely to suffer unless they receive advice or treatment.

- It is in the young person's best interests to give advice or treatment.

The requirement to offer a confidential service is within the professional code of practice for school nurses and other health staff. Health professionals must also inform appropriate services if they become aware of a child protection issue in discussions with a young person.

Parents and Families

We will respect the wishes of a family who want to share confidential information about their personal or child's circumstances. We will let them know if we feel it is important to share this information with other people and who it will be shared with. Parents are not consulted if it is felt that the child is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection concern.

Staff and Governors

All staff and governors can normally expect that their personal situations and health issues will remain confidential unless:

- It impinges upon their terms of contract.
- It endangers children or other members of staff.
- There is a legal obligation to disclose such information.
- It is necessary for legal proceedings.
- Despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or wider public interest justifies disclosure.

Principles behind conversations with children concerning confidentiality

- We want children to know that there will always be an adult in school who is available to listen to them and hear any concerns they may have. There are times when they may have worries but they feel you can't talk about them with their family. Everyone at school will try and do all they can to help them but they need to know some things
- Adults at school can help them with many of the things that may be worrying them but they cannot promise to keep everything to themselves. Sometimes, if it is really serious, they will have to let the Headteacher know who might then have to speak to their parent, the police or Children's Services.
- If they really want to talk to somebody without anybody else knowing what they have said, they may be able to speak to a School Nurse. We might be able to find someone else outside of school if they think this would be better for them.
- If the adult they speak to feels that they have to tell someone else what they've talked about, they will always tell the child first and help them sort it out, perhaps helping them to speak to their parent if they want this. Sometimes, even a School Nurse may have to tell someone else what they have said but they will tell them first and always help them sort things out.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Code of Conduct for Staff

- Social Media Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs (SEND) Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
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Evaluation and Review

Date of Ratification	Sept 2026
Date for Next Review	Sept 2029
Comments: New policy – review in full	