Confidentiality policy

Bucklesham Primary School

Approved by:	Rachael Rudge	**Date:** September 2026
Last reviewed on:	September 2023	
Next review due by:	September 2029	
Version:	3	

Aim

To protect the child at all times and to give all staff involved clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by pupils, parents/carers and staff.

Rationale

Bucklesham Primary School seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. We implement the underlying principles of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and address the issues which may arise about confidentiality. It is committed to developing creative and positive ways for the child's voice to be heard whilst recognising the responsibility to use, hold and safeguard information received.

Sharing information unnecessarily is an erosion of trust.

The school is mindful that it is placed in a position of trust by all stakeholders and there is a general expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Data Protection Policy.

Legal and statutory framework

This policy should be read alongside and conforms to the following:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (most recent DfE guidance)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Children Act 1989/2004
- School Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule.

Where there is a conflict, safeguarding obligations take precedence over data protection.

Objectives:

1. To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
2. To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
3. To ensure that staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality, policy and procedures and act on them.
4. To encourage children to be aware of confidentiality issues relating to their peers.
5. To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
6. To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
7. To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
8. To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all including rigorous monitoring of cultural, class, race, religion, medical conditions, gender and special educational needs.
9. To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.

10. To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons, ground rules are set for the protection of all.
11. To understand that health professionals are bound by different code of conduct.
12. To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

Information-sharing protocol

Staff should follow the 'need-to-know' principle and the school's information-sharing flowchart. If staff are unsure whether to share information, they should discuss with the DSL (or deputy in their absence). The school follows the DfE/NSPCC 'Information sharing: Advice for practitioners' principles: necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure. Where there is a child protection concern, information should be shared immediately with the DSL and, if required, with social care or police, without delay.

Guidelines

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.

2. All social services, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.

3. The school continues to actively promotes a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
a. The school has appointed a senior lead teacher for child protection who receives regular training.
b. There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents. And all staff have regular training on child protection issues.
c. There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse.
d. Parents/carers and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and the school has a duty to report child protection issues.
e. Staff are aware that effective sex and relationship education which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue.
f. Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
g. Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and should follow the schools discipline policy.

4. Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.

5. The school prides itself on good communication with parents and carers and staff are always available to talk to both children and parents/carers about issues that are causing concern. The school encourages children to talk to parents/carers about issues causing them concern and may in some cases support the children to talk to their

parents. The school would share with parents any child protection disclosure before going on to inform the correct authorities. Where a disclosure of harm is made, the DSL will normally seek to discuss this with parents/carers and explain next steps unless doing so would place the child at increased risk. The policy should make clear that sharing a disclosure with parents will not precede referral to social care where immediate safeguarding concerns exist.

6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that in exceptional circumstances confidentiality will be broken.

7. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs. A lot of data is generated in schools by these categories but individual children should not be able to be identified.

8. The school has appointed the Headteacher as Designated Safeguarding Lead. Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every year for all staff.

9. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other PSHE session dealing with sensitive issues such as sex and relationship and drugs. Strategies are in place and all children are aware of them for dealing with sensitive information which may fall outside the boundaries of child protection procedures. School needs to be proactive so children feel supported but information is not unnecessarily revealed in a public arena. Even when sensitive information appears to be widely known it should not be assumed by those immediately involved that it is appropriate to discuss or share this information further. When running PSHE, circle time or sensitive discussions, staff will set clear ground rules, record significant disclosures in writing and pass these to the DSL promptly. Staff should avoid discussing individual children's sensitive issues in front of others and should not seek informal updates from parents about safeguarding cases outside professional channels.

10. Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should be accessible to staff who need that information but not on general view to other parents/carers and children. For pupils with SEND or specific medical needs, information will be shared on a strictly need-to-know basis. Staff supporting medical needs will be identified; Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) will be held securely, and relevant aspects (e.g. allergies) will be included on class lists accessible to staff while avoiding wider disclosure.

11. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. The school gives clear guidance to parents about the use of cameras and videos during public school events. The school will obtain explicit, recorded parental consent (stored on the school's management information

system) before using pupils' images on the school website, social media, prospectus or press releases. Consent will be specific about context and may be withdrawn. Staff must not use personal devices to take or store images of pupils without prior explicit authorisation. School devices must be used and images transferred to secure school storage and deleted from devices promptly.

12. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time especially at parents evening. However parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school. All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by those who have access to it, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, SEN reports, SEN minutes of meetings and social services minutes of meetings and reports will be circulated in envelopes and once read should be returned for secure filing.

13. Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure and each child should have their own individual log. For pupils with specific medical needs, information will be shared, on a strictly need-to-know basis. Staff supporting medical needs will be identified; Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) will be held securely, and relevant aspects (e.g. allergies) will be included on class lists accessible to staff while avoiding wider disclosure.
In all other notes, briefing sheets etc a child should not be able to be identified. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.

14. Governors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such papers should be marked as confidential and should be copied onto different coloured paper. These confidential papers should be destroyed Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents. Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the governing body.

15. All children, parents/carers, staff members and governors must enjoy privacy from gossip. All matters are dealt with according to the school's procedures and out of the eye of the wider community. It is important that:-

- staff do not discuss details of individual cases to any person without direct professional connection to and interest in the welfare and education of the individual concerned.

- no member of staff discusses an individual child's behaviour/situation etc in the presence of another child.
- staff do not enter into detailed discussion about a child's behaviour with other children or their parents/carers.
- governors, in particular those sitting on Discipline Committees, do not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside of the meeting.
- staff performance management is carried out confidentially.
- matters of child protection are made known to staff on a need to know basis.
- class teachers and support staff are aware of some confidential matters in order to support individual children and adults. These staff will respect the sensitivity of such cases and not divulge information to people unconnected professionally with the individual concerned.
- volunteers, such as parents/carers and friends of the school do not discuss school matters in the wider community
- all staff (including volunteers, supply staff and governors) must receive induction training on confidentiality and data protection at the start of their service and refresher training annually. The DSL will ensure scenario-based training includes information-sharing decisions and record-keeping. Training attendance and materials will be recorded
- all volunteers, students and supply staff must sign a declaration acknowledging they have read and understood the confidentiality policy and safeguarding expectations before starting. The school will keep signed acknowledgements on file.

Records management, retention and security

All confidential pupil records (including child protection, SEN, medical and social care records) must be stored securely (locked filing cabinet or password-protected electronic system). Access must be restricted to staff with a legitimate professional need. The school's Records Retention Schedule sets retention periods (e.g. safeguarding files retain until child's 25th birthday or as per LA guidance). When records are transferred to another school, this should be by secure means and a receipt obtained. Disposal of confidential documents must be by secure shredding or secure deletion.
The school will keep a record of all significant information-sharing decisions (what was shared, why, with whom and when), and any parental consent or refusal. These logs will be held on the pupil's safeguarding file and reviewed during safeguarding audits.

Reporting breaches

Any suspected breach of confidentiality or data protection (lost device, email sent to wrong recipient, disclosure of records) must be reported immediately to the Headteacher and the Data Protection Officer. The school will follow the Data Breach Response Plan, assess likelihood of harm, contain the breach, and, if required, report to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) within 72 hours. Where safeguarding is implicated, the DSL must be informed at once.

Parental Access
Parents/carers have the right to access their child's education records under the Education (Pupil Information) Regulations 2005 and Data Protection legislation. Requests must be made in writing and fulfilled within statutory timeframes. The school will not disclose another child's personal information to parents. Requests for anonymised data or aggregated information may be provided where appropriate.

Accessibility
Age-appropriate information for pupils about confidentiality limits (e.g., posters, classroom rules) and the policy will be available on the school website.

Other Professionals
Multi-agency professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality.

Monitoring and Evaluation
The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle every 3 years. The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner in response to statutory changes, safeguarding incidents, or local authority/Ofsted guidance.
Policy date September 2023
Policy Review Date September 2026, September 2029

Links to other policies
This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy,
- Data Protection Policy,
- Records Retention Schedule,
- Online Safety Policy,
- Staff Code of Conduct,
- SEND Policy,
- Health & Safety Policy
- Supporting children with medical conditions policy.