

Juniper Hill School

# Confidentiality Policy



*Kindness Enjoyment Achievement*






Reviewed and updated May 2025

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## Aims




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

-  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. We, therefore, minimise information sharing to those occasions which are appropriate to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
-  Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns.
-  The school's attitude to confidentiality is open and easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
-  Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality and that there are limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community

## Objectives

-  To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
-  To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
-  To ensure that staff, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality, policy and procedures.
-  To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
-  To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
-  To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
-  To ensure that there is equality of provision and access for all including rigorous monitoring of cultural, gender and special educational needs.
-  To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.

-  To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
-  To understand that health professionals are bound by different code of conduct.
-  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.

## **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. We have 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 procedures and good practice are 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 pupil 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 in the course of a lesson given by a member of teaching staff or 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. (See setting ground rules and working agreements). 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.

### **2. One to one disclosure to members of school staff (including voluntary staff).**

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents/carers (see note below and Child Protection policy) and any required actions and sources of further support or help available, both for the pupil or parent/carer and for the staff member within the school. This includes support/advice from other agencies, where appropriate. All staff at this 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.

Note: 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 one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads as soon as 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 school Safeguarding Policy.

### **3. Disclosures to a 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.

### **4. Disclosures to external providers e.g. Behaviour Mentor, Play Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist etc**

Professional judgement is required in considering whether he or 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 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 Juniper Hill School receive Child Protection training as part of their induction to the school and are expected to follow the Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding procedures. Any concerns should be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### **The legal position for school staff**

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Pupils 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 school's staff can or should give such a promise.

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 Juniper Hill School 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 the pupils' safety and well-being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with their line manager/supervisor or the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead).

## **Visitors and non-teaching staff**

At Juniper Hill School, we expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff, to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 also gets the support and supervision they need. Visitors are given information about these procedures when they sign-in at reception.

## **Parents/carers**

Juniper Hill 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 matter staff at school, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves. The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at Juniper Hill School make about confidentiality.

## **Links to other school policies and procedures**

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with our:

PSHE Policy

Sex Education Policy

Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy

Relational Policy and Behaviour Policy

Whistle-Blowing Policy

Looked After Pupil Policy