



Confidentiality Policy

Caherline National School

Aims

- To protect the child at all times and to give all staff and others involved with the children, clear and unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles.
- To ensure good practice throughout the school, which is understood by pupils, parents/carers, staff, school visitors and Board of Management members.

Rationale

Caherline National School seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment.

The school authorities seek to 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 that there is an expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality.

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, pupils, visitors and Board of Management members are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
4. To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
5. To encourage children to talk to their parents and teachers.

6. To ensure that pupils and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
7. To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.
8. To understand that health professionals are bound by different code of conduct.
9. 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.

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 promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
 - a) The school has appointed senior lead teachers for child protection, Gearóid Power (DLP) and Lisa Riordan (DDL) 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) 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.
 - e) Staff are aware of the need to handle all issues about different types of families in a sensitive manner.
 - f) Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and should follow the schools discipline policy.
 - g) Information collected for one purpose should not be used for another.
4. 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.
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.
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 significant amount of data is generated in schools by these categories but individual children should not be able to be identified.
8. The school has appointed a senior member of staff as Child Protection Officer, Gearóid Power (DLP) and Lisa Riordan (DDL). Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every two years for all staff.
9. 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.
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.
11. Photographs of children should not be used without parents/carers permission especially in the press and internet. This is often a cultural issue that the school needs to be aware of. At no time should the child's name be used with a photograph so that they can be identified without the consent of the parents/carers.
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. However parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school if/when they change school.
13. 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 to the child's teacher, if necessary, in envelopes and once read should be returned for secure filing. Logs of administration of medication to children should be kept secure and each child should have their own individual log. 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. Board of Management members need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such discussions and associated paperwork is confidential and should be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Any confidential papers should be destroyed after the

meeting and members of the board of management (except for the Chairperson and School Principal) should not bring any notes/papers relating to such issues with them from Board meetings. Although decisions reached at Board of Management meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential. Members of the Board should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the Board of Management. Obligation to maintain confidentiality continues to apply even after an individual has left the board.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools policy monitoring/evaluation cycle.
2. The school Principal/Board of Management has responsibility for monitoring this policy.

Summary

Caherline National School has a duty of care and responsibility towards pupils, parents/carers and staff. The school also needs to work with a range of outside agencies and share information on a professional basis. The care and safety of the individual is the key issue pertaining to this policy document.

Declaration of Confidentiality:

A declaration of confidentiality must be completed and signed by all those who volunteer/work within the school or for the school, indicating that they clearly understand and are willing to abide by the guidelines governing this policy.

If you agree to the above, please sign and return the following declaration to the school.

Declaration of Confidentiality

I, _____ have read the Caherline National School Confidentiality Policy and I do hereby agree to adhere to the policy.

Signed: _____