



The Southfield Trust Confidentiality Policy

Principles

All permanent staff, temporary staff, professionals working in the school, supply staff, students on placements and research students will, during their time in the Trust schools have contact with children with a wide range of complex special needs. They will also be part of or overhear conversations or have access to papers with confidential information. Care must be taken to ensure that at no time pupils, their families or circumstances are discussed in any way with persons other than relevant school staff or other professionals unless permission has been obtained in writing.

It is expected that the class teacher or a member of the senior management team are the professional persons who will in all cases have first contact with parents/carers/professionals from outside agencies, taxi drivers/escorts and other visitors. No copies of any official documents may be made without permission from the Head of School or their representative.

Your employment or placement is at risk if these guidelines are not adhered to.

In school do not make any 'throw away comments' near pupils, which may be misunderstood and repeated at home

All permanent staff, temporary staff, professionals working in the school, supply staff, students on placements and research students will be expected to sign a form to indicate that they have read and understood these guidelines.

Parent/carer Consultations

Teachers

During the course of the year, teachers meet with parents/carers on a regular basis. These meetings may be by arrangement or take place because the parent /carer is in school for another event. Teachers should be aware that they should only discuss a child with that child's parents/carers.

Many parents/carers compare their child with other children. Sometimes these comparisons are with relatives' children or the children of friends. If two, related children are in the same class this can lead to extra difficulty. If direct questions are asked about other children you are advised to inform the parent/carer that you are unable to comment on other children. Sometimes queries about other children are less direct, and in this case you must be careful to remember the school guidelines.

Teaching Assistants and Other Staff

Teaching Assistants and support staff are not generally present at parent meetings. However, there are times during the school day when parents/carers are in school and TAs or support staff may be approached. TAs and support staff must not make any comment on a pupil's progress, behaviour, work etc. They should always refer the parent/carer to the class teacher, or if they are not available, to a senior manager or Head of School.

Teaching Assistants with specialised roles may only comment on the work they carry out and the progress related to this work. Teaching Assistants carrying out any medical support will have a medical protocol, which they will adhere to and which will be reported on in line with the protocol.

Working with Professionals and Other Staff

During the course of a school year, teachers and teaching assistants will work with other professionals. Many of these professionals will be in school whilst others will be at meetings held outside of school as follows:

Speech & Language Therapists

The Speech and Language Therapist is a Health Authority employee and written permission from the parent/carer is needed to discuss a child's speech and language programme with the therapist. (This is in the Parent Pack, which all pupils new to the school receive).

Physiotherapists

The Physiotherapist is a Health Authority employee and written permission from the parent/carer is needed to discuss a child's physiotherapy programme with the therapist. (This is in the Parent Pack, which all pupils new to the school receive.)

Educational Psychologists

The Educational Psychologist, (EP) is employed by East Sussex Education Authority. A teacher can discuss a child's progress, special educational needs and any other relevant factors with the EP. If a teacher is concerned about a child's progress, placement or there is a specific problem, this should be taken to the child's Annual Review. Any request for referral should be made to the Head of School and relevant Senior Teacher prior to the Annual Review. Any request for intervention by the EP must be made in writing by the parent outlining the reason for the request. (see attached form Appendix 1)

Other Professionals

From time to time, various agencies e.g. Family Intensive Support Service (FISS) request our co-operation in working with children and their families. These professionals are asked to fill in a form before arrangements are made by the Heads of School for them to work in our schools. (Appendix2).

Research Students

Research students must fill in the same form (Appendix 2) before any request can be made.

Social Services and Child Protection

Many of our families have support from Social Services. Staff must be aware that parents/carers must be aware of any information that is given to Social Services employees. **The exception is any information that falls under the Child Protection Procedures.** In school all concerns of Child Protection should be discussed with the Designated Child Protection Teacher (**Martin Harrington**). The Executive Head Teacher and both Heads of School are also DCPT trained and can be contacted in the absence of Martin Harrington. The schools will always endeavour to send a representative to attend meetings that fall under Child Protection Procedures, but it is not possible to send staff to Social Services Review Meetings. Usually a written advice is sent and this should follow the above guidelines (ie parent/carers must be aware of information given).

Annual Reviews

The Annual Review is the opportunity to discuss a child's progress over the past year and to look at strategies and programmes for the future. All aspects of a child's development can be discussed at the review meeting. Professionals from other agencies may be present.

Placement

The Annual Review is the time when a child's placement will be discussed by the parents/carers and the school representatives. They will look at whether the school remains the correct placement for the child and this is the only time that a placement should be discussed. If a parent/carer has concerns well before an annual review is

due, they can request an early review. Staff concerns can be discussed with a Senior Teacher or Head of School. If the question of placement comes up at another meeting, the parent/carer should be asked to see the Head of School who will explain the process. The Educational Psychologist will always be involved if a change of placement is requested or recommended.

Parents/carers who are unsure about their child's placement can visit any school within the LEA area. They should however be informed of the LEA policy in relation to transport to and from school. No comment should be made outside of an Annual review as to whether another school may be more appropriate.

Teachers or Teaching assistants are not in a position to recommend another specific school. Only at the annual review may another phase be recommended, and this will need to be supported by a full report from the Educational Psychologist. A specific school cannot be named as our pupils come from a diverse area of East Sussex and the LEA has a definite policy on paying for school transport.

Integration

Integration into a mainstream school (or the possibility) must not be discussed or suggested to the parents at any time. If a parent/carer asks about integration, they must be directed to speak to the correct person, where it will be explained that any integration that does take place does so following an annual review. At the annual review meeting requests for integration are noted but no promises can be made at this stage.

Any staff that accompany pupils on integration are reminded that they should only discuss the work programme. Any other information required by the host school should be discussed by the Head of School or their representative.

Educational and Residential Visits (including swimming)

When staff are out of school with a group of pupils for any reason, care should be taken to ensure that all staff work as a team and support the class teacher and school rules of behaviour at all times. It is not appropriate for any member of staff to talk to any member of the public about the children either collectively or individually. Procedures for acceptable behaviour should be carried out in the minibus so that the driver is not distracted in any way. On all visits you are reminded that the named group leader is the adult in charge.

Taxi Time

The majority of pupils at the Trust travel to and from school by taxi/minibus and they often have an escort with them. Many drivers and escorts accompany specific pupils for years and become attached to their charge and are genuinely interested in their welfare. All staff must be aware that under no circumstances should a child be discussed with the driver or their escort. This can be difficult if a direct question is asked. Care must be taken to ensure that as a pupil enters or leaves the classroom that no remark is made to the child which may be misunderstood. There have been incidents when drivers/escorts have been known to read the Home-School books, impose their own punishment and then make remarks to the child or their parents

about the child's behaviour. It is suggested that Home- School books are put in book bags out of sight to prevent this.

Taxi drivers and their escorts can also be very useful in passing on information to the school as to home circumstances, but in hearing things you should certainly make no comment.

Confidential materials

- The Trust has procedures regarding any information that may be deemed confidential.
- Child protection information is held by the named person on the relevant site where the child is based. This material is locked away. Only the named person (Martin Harrington,) the Heads of School and the Executive Head Teacher have access to this material.
- All information held on computer is governed by The Information Security and Access policy, this policy is updated annually.
- If any materials are photocopied for use other than school and LEA requirements, all names are erased.
- Materials which are no longer relevant are taken to the main office and shredded.
- Class Incident Files are a working document in each group. The expectation is that these should be kept in a discreet place in the classroom.

Common Law Duty of Confidentiality

It is the duty of a teacher/member of staff to respect any information that is told to them in confidence. If a child tells you something in confidence, you must respect their confidentiality and not disclose the information that is told to you. You have a duty to treat that information in confidence.

Disclosure of confidential information from a pupil, parent or another member of staff can only be justified if the information impacts on a Child Protection issue. In a child protection case, the teacher or member of staff needs to inform the pupil/parent that they will have to pass the information on to another agency.

NB In producing this policy, it is the intention to clarify working practices and to safeguard staff from accusations of unprofessional conduct. Remember other people may misconstrue your comments and repeat them out of context to others.