



## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

### **1 RATIONALE**

1.1 At Redland Green School we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our students are given paramount consideration when decisions about confidentiality are made
- The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our students' well-being and safety
- It is an essential part of our ethos that trust is established to enable students, staff and parents to seek help both within and outside the school
- We minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure students and staff are supported and safe
- Students, parents and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships which can arise at any time
- Everyone in the school community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health, sex and relationship or other personal issue they want to discuss
- In certain incidences, such as disclosed abuse and when concerns about a student are noted, confidentiality cannot be assured for that student, however, information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis
- Our policy should be easily understood and accessible to everyone so that all stakeholders are able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school

### **2 DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 2.1 Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 In practice there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our school. We strive to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our students and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where students and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and good practice are followed.
- 2.4 This means that in most cases what is offered 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.
- 2.5 Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The student will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in the information

sharing.

2.6 Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances:

i) **IN THE CLASSROOM IN THE COURSE OF A LESSON**

Given by a member of staff or an outside 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 students that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential personal information. When a health professional is contributing to a school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

ii) **ONE TO ONE DISCLOSURES TO MEMBERS OF SCHOOL STAFF**

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both students and parents and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the student or parent, within the school and from other agencies where appropriate (in line with the RGS Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy). All staff at RGS encourage students to discuss different issues with their parents and vice versa.

iii) **DISCLOSURES TO A COUNSELLOR, SCHOOL NURSE OR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL OPERATING A CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE IN THE SCHOOL**

Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to students 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 16's). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage students to discuss issues with their parents/carers. However, the needs of the student are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a student's parents are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

iv) **CONTRACEPTIVE ADVICE & PREGNANCY**

The Department of Health has issued guidance (July 2004) which clarifies and confirms that health professionals owe young people under 16 the same duty of care and confidentiality as older patients. It sets out principles of good practice in providing contraception and sexual health to under 16's. The duty of care and confidentiality applies to all under 16's. Whether a young person is competent to consent to treatment or is in serious danger is judged by the health professional on the circumstances of each individual case, not solely on the age of the patient. However, the younger the patient the greater the concern that they may be being abused or exploited. The Guidance makes it clear that health professionals must make time to explore whether there may be coercion or abuse. Cases of grave concern should be referred through RGS child protection procedures.

### **3 THE LEGAL POSITION FOR SCHOOL STAFF**

3.1 All school staff should not promise confidentiality. Students do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents 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 student is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

3.2 School staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection or illegal or dangerous activity is or may be an issue, however at Redland Green School we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about student's safety and well-being.

### **3.3 SCHOOL STAFF, COUNSELLORS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

Professional judgement is required by a member of school staff, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he/she should indicate to a student that the student 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 member of school staff, counsellor or health professional must consider the best interests of the student, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our students and possible child protection issues. All staff at this school receive basic training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and are expected to follow the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and procedures.

### **3.4 COUNSELLORS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

At Redland Green School we offer students the support of a counsellor on a case-by-case basis. The school nursing service operate a drop-in service for students. These services are confidential between the counsellor or health professional and the individual student. No information is shared with school staff except as defined in the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our students.

### **3.5 VISITORS & NON-TEACHING STAFF**

At Redland Green School we expect all non-teaching staff to verbally report any disclosures by students or parents of a concerning nature to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Louise Blundell, as soon as possible after the disclosure and for this to be followed by a written record within 24 hours. The referral should take place in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, following the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy guidelines.

### **3.6 PARENTS**

Redland Green School believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and we endeavour to keep parents 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 students can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a student does discuss a difficult personal issue, staff at Redland Green School will encourage the student to also discuss the matter with their parents and may be supported to do so where it is appropriate.

## **4 COMPLEX CASES**

4.1 Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, Redland Green School will consult with the Local Area Safeguarding Board/First Response.

## **5 WHEN CONFIDENTIALITY SHOULD BE BROKEN & THE PROCEDURES FOR DOING THIS**

5.1 Please refer to the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead is Louise Blundell; the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officers are Tina Jackson, Sarah Haine and Catherine Martin.

## **6 SUPPORT FOR STAFF**

6.1 Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our students. At Redland Green School we prefer staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because they do not have access to all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about students home with them. Staff should discuss any concerns with their line managers or staff Representative.

## **7 LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES**

7.1 This policy has links with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Sex & Relationships Education Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Governors' Code of Conduct Policy
- Whistle-blowing Policy

## **8 REVIEW**

8.1 This policy is reviewed regularly and amended as necessary.

Agreed by Staff	Agreed by Pupils	Agreed by Governors	Review Schedule	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed
N/A	N/A	01 JUL 2008	3 YEARS	13 JUN 2011	26 FEB 2015		
Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Date Reviewed