

St Alban's Catholic High School



Confidentiality Policy

Approved by Student's Committee on: 29 June 2020

Recommission Date: June 2022

Section 1 The importance of Confidentiality

1.1 At St Alban's Catholic High School we believe that:

The safety, well-being and protection of our students are the paramount consideration 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 students well-being and safety;

It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable students, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure students, staff are supported and safe;

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;

Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality;

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;

students, parents/carers and staff need to understand there are boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.

Section 2 The Definition of Confidentiality

2.1 We view the definition of confidential is "something which is spoken or given in confidence; private, entrusted with another's affairs"

2.2 In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered in St Alban's Catholic High School. The school will try 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 is followed.

2.3 Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances.

2.4 The general rule is that staff should make 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 will be encouraged to do this for themselves whenever this is possible.

Section 3 Different levels of confidentiality

3.1 In the classroom:

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. (See setting ground rules and working agreements in Section 5.1).

When a health professional is contributing to a school health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

3.2 One to one disclosures 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 students and parents/carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the student or parent/carer and for the staff member within the school and from other agencies, where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage students to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the student are paramount and school staff will not automatically share information about the student 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 the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as is practically 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.)

3.3 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 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 students to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the student are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a student's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

Section 4 The legal position:

4.1 School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Students 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 the 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 safeguarding is, or may be, an issue. However, at St Alban's school we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about students 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 students' safety and well-being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with their line manager or directly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

4.2 Teachers, counsellor and health professionals:

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional 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 teacher, counsellor or health 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 this school receive basic training in safeguarding as part of their ongoing in service training to this school and are expected to follow the schools' safeguarding policy and procedures.

4.3 Counsellors and Health Professionals:

At St Alban's we offer students the support of professionals discreetly through the Heads of Year or Student Support Managers, and the school nursing service operate 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 policy. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our students.

4.4 Visitors and non-teaching staff:

We expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff, except those identified in the paragraph above, to report any disclosures by students 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 students and staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, both to ensure the student gets the help and support they need and that the member of staff also gets the support and supervision they need.

4.5 Parents/carers:

We believe 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 students can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a student does discuss a difficult personal matter staff will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

The safety, well-being and protection of our students is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

4.6 Complex cases:

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, consultation will be sought with the **Professional Consultation Line** for Children's Safeguarding.

Section 5 The policy in practice

5.1 We adopt ground rules to ensure a safe environment for teaching. This reduces anxiety to students and staff and minimises unconsidered, unintended personal disclosures. This is encompassed in choosing appropriate guidelines for classroom debate.

5.2 When confidentiality should be broken and procedures for doing this:

-See the Safeguarding Policy;

-Where this does not apply and staff are still concerned and unsure of whether the information should be passed on or other action taken they should speak to Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If the Headteacher issues instructions that he should be kept informed, all staff must comply. There is always a good reason for this, about which staff may not know.

5.3 The principles we follow are that in all cases we:

Ensure the time and place are appropriate, when they are not we reassure the child that we understand they need to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy;

See the child normally (and always in cases of neglect, or abuse) before the end of the school day.

More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible;

Inform the student first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this;

Tell the child we cannot guarantee confidentiality if we think they will:

hurt themselves;

hurt someone else;

or they tell us that someone is hurting them or others.

Will not put children in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people;

Will not interrogate the child or ask leading questions;

Encourage the student, whenever possible to confide in his/her own parents/carers.

5.4 Support for staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our students. We prefer staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because they don't have all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about students' home with them. There are many agencies we can refer students to who need additional support and there are procedures to ensure this happens. The school works together as part of a team to support our students and asking for help is away we ensure the school is a happy and safe learning environment.

5.5 Onward referral:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is (or designated seconds are) responsible for referring students to outside agencies from the school via the MASH. Students can also obtain confidential help themselves e.g.: school nurse drop ins, 4YP clinics, GP, local drug and alcohol agencies, Childline, NSPCC, Kooth etc.

Signed by J McCall, Chair of Governors:

Date:

