



METHERINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Policies, Procedures, Regulations and Guidance

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1	January 2025	Reviewed. No changes
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CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

January 2026

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

School Name: Metheringham Primary School.

Date of Policy: January 2026

Date of Policy Review: January 2027

At Metheringham Primary School we believe that:

- The safety, wellbeing and protection of our pupils 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 pupils wellbeing 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. It is also important that we minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared 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.
- 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.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 This school recognises its legal duty under section 175 Education Act 2002 to work with other agencies in safeguarding children and protecting them from "*significant harm*".
- 1.2 This school recognises that a clear confidentiality policy will support the school in meeting the Every Child Matters outcomes of "be healthy" and "stay safe".
- 1.3 The staff seek to adopt an open and accepting attitude towards children and young people as part of their general responsibility for pastoral care.
- 1.4 Staff hope that parents and children will feel free to talk about any concerns or worries which may affect educational progress and that they will see the school as a safe place if there are any difficulties at home.
- 1.5 This school recognises the following benefits of working to a confidentiality policy:
 - It highlights the importance of pupils being able to talk to adults in the school to share their problems in a safe and supportive environment.
 - It safeguards the well being of those involved in the disclosure of confidential information.
 - It builds trust between pupils and staff.
 - It empowers each pupil to exercise control over the choices that will affect their life.

- It prevents the need to deal with each disclosure as a crisis in isolation. (See guidance on school specific information 1 – Appendix 1)

2.0 A DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 2.1 Confidentiality is an understanding that any information shared with someone in trust can only be passed on to a third party with the agreement of the person disclosing it. The dictionary definition of confidential is “*something which is spoken or given in confidence; private, entrusted with another’s secret affairs*”.

Please note, in this policy, a ‘disclosure’ is the sharing of any private/personal information.

It is a general term and does not just relate to child protection issues.

3.0 THE LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 Staff, pupils, parents/carers will be informed about the limits of confidentiality in this school. Some issues have to be shared with other people/agencies e.g. child protection.
- 3.2 Pupils will be advised (wherever possible prior to a disclosure) what kinds of disclosure will require information to be shared, what will be done with the information and who else will have access to it.
- 3.3 Members of staff will be made aware of who (if anyone) to inform in the event of different types of disclosures of a personal nature.
- 3.4 This school recognises that confidential discussions need to take place in a confidential environment. Public places such as the staffroom, the classroom and the playground are not, in general confidential environments.
- 3.5 This school will provide opportunities for its pupils to access confidential support on school premises in the following ways: By speaking or writing to the Headteacher, Class teacher, SENCO or a member of staff that they feel comfortable in approaching.
- 3.6 Parents/carers and pupils have the right to view educational records upon written request. It is therefore not possible to guarantee the confidentiality of recorded information (see – Recording of information in Supporting Information).
- 3.7 **Staff are required to pass on confidential information in the following circumstances:**
- Child protection
 - where there is risk of serious harm or threat to life
 - where a pupil needs urgent medical treatment
 - where potential or actual serious crime (e.g. murder, rape) is involved
 - where safeguarding national security is involved e.g. terrorism

3.8 Responsibilities to parents/carers

- Members of staff are not legally obliged to inform parents/carers in many instances when personal information has been disclosed. (See Guidance on school specific information 3 – Appendix 1).

- Where it is believed that the pupil may be at emotional or physical risk, or in breach of the law, staff will ensure that the pupil is aware of the risks they face.
- Staff will encourage the pupil to inform and seek support from their parents/carers.
- In most cases information provided by a pupil will only be passed to their parents/carers with the pupil's consent.
- When the school chooses to inform parents/carers it will only be done if it is in the best interests of the child.

3.9 **Illegal activity**

- Members of staff are not obliged to inform the police on most matters relating to illegal activity e.g. illegal drugs activity, assaults. Staff should be aware of paragraph 3.7 in relation to when this information must be shared.
- In the case of illegal activity, the school will discuss the possible consequences with the pupil and seek the course of action with the most positive outcomes for the pupil.

4.0 **STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4.1 All staff (teaching and non-teaching staff) will be made aware of the confidentiality policy and their entitlement to training and support in its implementation.
- 4.2 All staff are under a contractual obligation to uphold the policy as with all other school policies. Failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary procedures being followed.
- 4.3 Staff will be made aware of this policy during staff training and meeting times.
- 4.4 Staff can seek advice and support for themselves when dealing with a disclosure whilst keeping the individual's identity anonymous. The school will maintain an up-to-date list of appropriate contacts for staff so that they can seek support. This will include the following members of staff at this school.
- 4.5 Volunteers and visitors are made aware of the importance of confidentiality in school through the interview process, staff handbook and conversations during the induction process. Information shared with visitors and volunteers, and incidents that happen in school are strictly confidential. Parents should be advised to contact school during school hours to discuss concerns rather than talking to staff in their own time.

Leanne Duggin	Headteacher
Tracey Freeman	Deputy Headteacher
Natalie Jones	Assistant Headteacher

and include the following external agencies and LEA support:

<i>Children's Services</i>	<i>01522 782111</i>
<i>Child protection</i>	<i>Ruth Fox 01522 552222</i>
<i>Children's Health Service</i>	<i>01522 552222</i>
<i>Crime/anti-social behaviour</i>	<i>PCSO's 101</i>

5.0 **WORKING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

- 5.1 Anyone working with pupils from the school particularly on sensitive areas of the curriculum needs to be made aware of the school's confidentiality policy.
- 5.2 School staff and staff from external agencies will establish at the beginning of lessons dealing with potentially sensitive topics that it is inappropriate to disclose personal information during the lesson. Ground rules need to be agreed which ensure individuals do not pressure one another to answer questions about their own experiences.
- 5.3 Staff will outline the sources of support available to any pupil who may wish to discuss the topics and/or their feelings further on a one-to-one basis.
- 5.4 This school acknowledges and supports the differences between the role of any non-school staff as educators, and as providers of information and support to pupils. The boundaries between these roles will be clarified and agreed prior to involvement. Any distinctions in terms of confidentiality need to be made clear to pupils.

6.0 RECORDING INFORMATION (See Supporting Information)

- 6.1 The school acknowledges that:
- Pupils and their parents/carers have a right to gain access to *processed* information upon written request.
 - Agencies such as the Police and Social Services Dept. may be able to get a court order to gain access to *processed* information, which the school deems confidential. This can also include the Local Authority's legal department and insurers, as well as other solicitors e.g. in custody cases.
- 6.2 Any information recorded about a pupil will be written in a way that assumes it will be read by either the subject or their parents/carers.
- 6.3 In order to comply with the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records (issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000), any *processed* information will be stored in accordance with the Schools Record Management Systems.

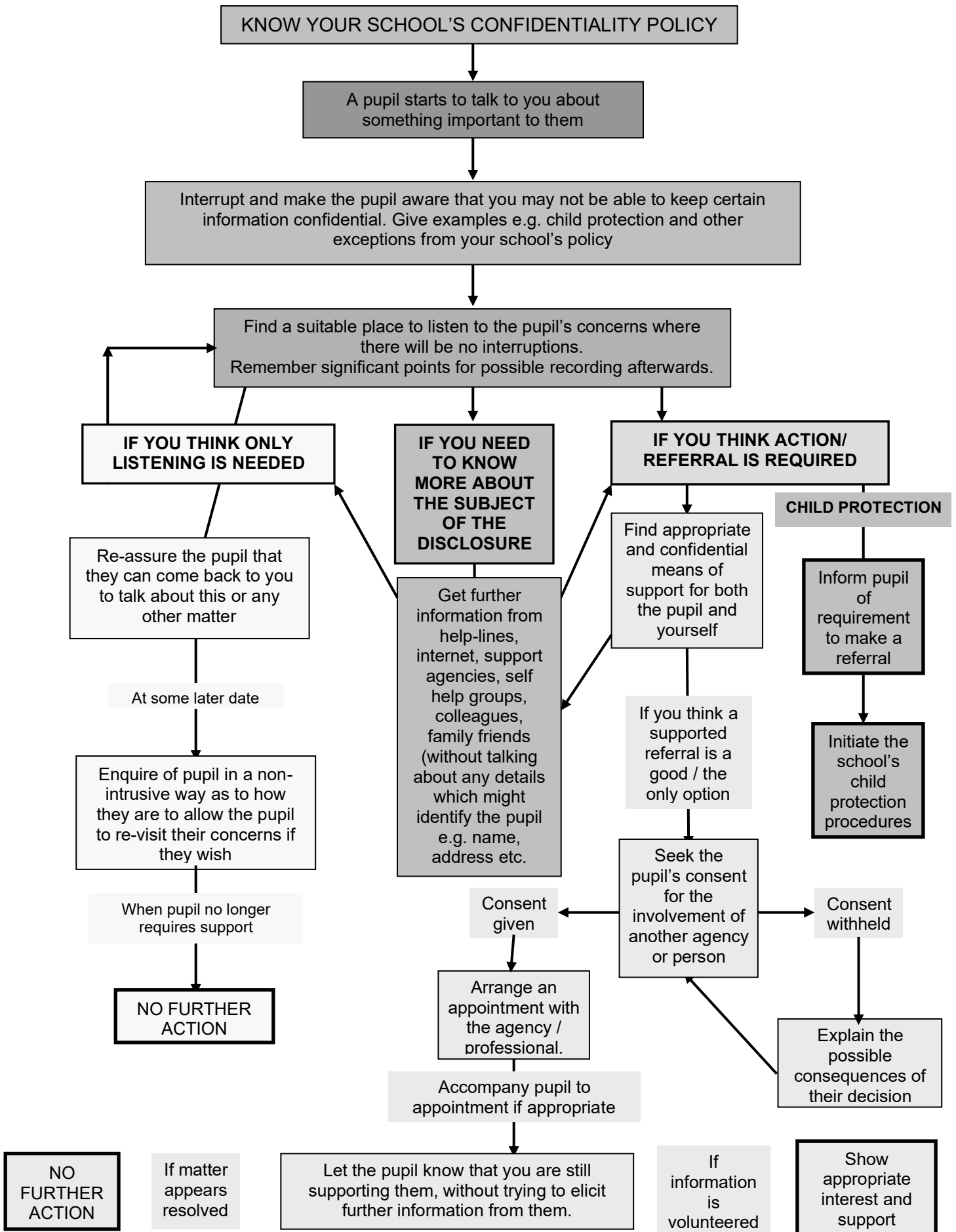
7.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 7.1 The policy will be reviewed after each significant disclosure to ensure that the policy and procedures work appropriately.
- 7.2 This policy will be reviewed on a biannual basis in line with other policy documents.
- 7.3 Pupils will be consulted during the review process.

8.0 COMMUNICATING THE POLICY

- 8.1 The policy will be communicated to all school staff, governors, parents/carers, partner agencies and relevant visitors.
- 8.2 The policy will be listed on the school's publication scheme (Freedom of Information Act 2000).
- 8.3 The flow chart for how to deal with confidential disclosures will be displayed on appropriate staff room notice board(s).

FLOWCHART TO SHOW THE PROCESS FOR HANDLING A DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION



GUIDANCE ON SCHOOL SPECIFIC INFORMATION

1. Examples of where a confidentiality policy might be of use:

- a pupil knows someone who is bullying others at the school but is unsure about whether or not to tell
- a pupil starts sharing something very personal in a classroom situation
- a school uses staff or peers as a support system for pupils e.g. listening, befriending
- a pupil informs a lunchtime supervisor that their Dad is hitting their Mum
- a pupil talks to a member of staff about their knowledge of a crime e.g. shoplifting, assault

2. **Exceptions to confidentiality**

Likely exceptions requiring consideration by the school might include:-

- where there is risk of serious harm or threat to life
- where a pupil needs urgent medical treatment
- where potential or actual serious crime (e.g. murder, rape) is involved
- where safeguarding national security is involved e.g. terrorism

This must be consistent with other policies

3. **Age-related considerations**

Confidentiality issues need to take into consideration the differing abilities of pupils to understand the consequences of their choices. This understanding depends on the level of maturity of each individual, but there may be some correlation to their age.

The judge in the Victoria Gillick case gave the following general advice:-

"It is suggested that a child or young person's ability to make decisions about his/her life depends on him/her having "sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his/her own mind".

Before sharing any disclosed information with parents/carers, schools need to either obtain the consent of the pupil or consider the possible consequences of sharing the information, taking into account knowledge of family circumstances. This will need to be done on a case by case basis.

Each school will need to consider issues relating to confidentiality and the age/maturity of their pupils.

This policy should be read in conjunction with a number of our school policies including those listed below:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff

- Safer Working Practices
- Healthy Schools Policy