



## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

### **At Nidderdale High School we believe that:**

- a. The safety, well-being 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 well-being and safety.
- b. 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 and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe
- c. 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, including sex and relationships.
- d. 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.
- e. Issues concerning personal information including sex and relationships and other personal matters can arise at any time.
- f. Everyone in the school community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- g. 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.

### **Definition of Confidentiality**

The dictionary definition of confidential is "something which is spoken or given in confidence; private, entrusted with another's secret affairs"

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.

In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered at Nidderdale High School.

In most cases what is on offer 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.

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 pupil 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.

### **Levels of Confidentiality**

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

- a. In the classroom during the course of a lesson given by a member of teaching 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 pupils that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential, personal information. (Appendix 1). When a health professional is contributing to a school health education programme in a classroom setting, s/he is working within the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

- b. 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 pupils and parents/carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the pupil or parent/carer and for the staff member within the school and from other agencies, where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage pupils to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

Note: In line with Safeguarding and Child Protection guidance, 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 or Deputy.

- c. Disclosures to health professionals operating a confidential service in the school. Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils 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 16s). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a pupil's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.
- d. Contraceptive advice and pregnancy. Department of Health guidance 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 advice to under-16s. The duty of care and confidentiality applies to all under-16s. 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. The guidance makes it clear that health professionals must make time to explore whether there may be coercion or abuse. Cases of grave concern would be referred through child protection procedures.

### **Expectations of school staff**

School staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) must not promise absolute confidentiality. Pupils 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 this 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 child protection is or may be an issue. However, at Nidderdale High School we believe it is important that staff are able to share their concerns about pupils 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 pupils' safety and well-being is maintained. School staff should discuss such concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy.

All teachers at this school have received basic training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and all staff receive update training annually. All staff are expected to follow the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

### **Expectations of Health Professionals**

At our school we offer pupils access to Health Professionals through the Pastoral Support Centre including Healthy Child Team and Just B Counselling. These services are confidential between the health professionals and the individual pupil. No information is shared with school staff except when deemed necessary by the Health Professional for the safety of the young person concerned. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our pupils.

## **Expectations of visitors and non-teaching staff**

At our school, we expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff, except those identified in the paragraph above, to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy 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 pupils and staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, both to ensure the pupil gets the help and support they need and that the member of staff also gets the support and supervision they need.

## **Sharing information with parents/carers**

Nidderdale High School believes 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 pupils can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal matter staff at school, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

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

## **Complex cases**

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, we will seek a consultation with North Yorkshire Safeguarding Team and / or Social Services.

## **Links to other school policies and procedures:**

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the following policies:

- a. Education and Management of Drugs
- b. Sex and Relationships
- c. Child Protection
- d. Anti-Bullying
- e. Children Looked After
- f. Mental Health Policy

Approved by Full Governing Body 28 June 2021

Date of next review: June 2024

### **Statement of ground rules to be used in lessons**

We adopt ground rules to ensure a safe environment for teaching in particular in PSHE and tutorial. This reduces anxiety to pupils and staff and minimises unconsidered, unintended personal disclosures.

At the beginning of the year the teacher will establish ground rules with pupils. The teacher will review the ground rules together with the pupils at the beginning of each term of teaching.

This is an example of the ground rules:

- a. We won't ask each other or the teacher any personal questions
- b. We will respect each other and not laugh, tease or hurt others
- c. We won't say things we want to keep confidential
- d. We can pass or opt out of something if it makes us feel uncomfortable
- e. If we do find out things about other pupils, which are personal and private, we won't talk about it outside the lesson
- f. If we do find out things about other pupils, which are personal and private, we won't talk about it outside the lesson, but
- g. If we are worried about someone else's safety we tell a teacher

### **Principles for confidential conversations**

The principles we follow at Nidderdale High School in all cases are that we will:

Ensure the time and place for discussion or disclosure are appropriate, when they are not, we reassure the young person that we understand the need to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy.

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

Report serious concerns immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as soon as possible.

Tell the young person we cannot guarantee confidentiality if we think they may hurt themselves or hurt someone else or if they tell us that someone is hurting them or others.

Do not interrogate the young person or ask leading questions.

Avoid putting young people in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people.

Inform the pupil first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this.

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