



OWLS Academy Trust

Staff and Volunteer Confidentiality Policy

Version: 1.0

Adopted by The OWLS Academy Trust on	July 5 th 2021
Date of Last Review	
Next Review Due	May 18 th 2022

Version Control:

- Minor adjustments should be indicated by changing the number after the full-stop and will not change the adoption date. Such changes will be noted, and approved by Trustees using the Review History
- More significant adjustments should be indicated by changing to the next whole number (i.e. version 1.12 would move to version 2.0 after a significant change) and would then need to be formally adopted.

Review History

Date	By	Changes Made	Approved by Trustees



Statement of intent

This document guides staff, volunteers and visitors on the policy and procedures surrounding confidentiality.

Staff members take a supportive and accepting attitude towards pupils as part of their general responsibility for pastoral care. It is our hope that both pupils and parents feel free to discuss worries about Owls Academy Trust, and concerns that may affect the educational progress of a pupil, with members of the school team.

This policy will be abided by at all times by staff, volunteers, visitors, pupils and parents. In order to ensure the utmost level of safety for pupils, staff members at the school have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and not share information with external agencies, other schools or individuals.

The Staff and Volunteer Confidentiality Policy has the following benefits, it:

- Ensures that important information regarding the school is not shared.
- Guarantees that financial information stays confidential and secure.
- Helps to build trust amongst staff, volunteers and external agencies.
- Supports the school's safeguarding measures.

NB: For the purpose of this policy the words Trust and School refers to all schools within the OWLS Academy Trust.



Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- The General Data Protection Regulation
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Education Act 2002
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 This policy is compliant under the following case law:
- The Common Law Duty of Confidentiality

1.2. This policy also has due regard to guidance documents including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2018) 'Information sharing'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'

1.3. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

- E-safety Policy

Definitions

- 2.1. For the purpose of this policy, 'confidentiality' is an understanding that any information shared with someone in trust will only be passed on to a third party with the prior and explicit agreement of the person disclosing it.
- 2.2. Within this policy, a 'disclosure' is the sharing of any private information; this term does not solely relate to child protection issues.
- 2.3. The term '**limited confidentiality**' refers to the disclosure of information with professional colleagues; however, the confider would not be identified except in pre-determined circumstances.

Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1. All staff members, volunteers and individuals working in cooperation with the school will uphold their responsibility and duty of confidentiality, ensuring that information and personal details are not shared or discussed with others, except for the appropriate necessary bodies.
- 3.2. Visitors, volunteers and other professionals, such as healthcare professionals, will work within the same boundaries of confidentiality as all staff members.
- 3.3. Staff members and volunteers alike, have the responsibility of keeping information regarding the school, including its pupils and parents, etc., confidential. This information will under no circumstances be shared, unless it is in the best interest of the school or its pupils.
- 3.4. All staff members, volunteers and external agencies will treat any information regarding the management and finance of the school as confidential, and, therefore, this information will only be shared with necessary and appropriate external individuals.
- 3.5. Members of staff, volunteers, visitors, external parties and other agencies will always seek advice from a practitioner at the school if there is any doubt over sharing the information concerned, without disclosing any identifiable information where possible.
- 3.6. As a precautionary safeguarding measure, the school will ask all staff members, volunteers, visitors and external agencies who work closely with the school to sign a code of conduct/staff handbook.
- 3.7. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that a code of conduct, is signed by all individuals who may be privy to information which is not suitable to be shared.

Confidentiality and child protection

- 4.1. The school aims to strike a balance between confidentiality and trust, ensuring the safety, wellbeing and protection of our pupils.
- 4.2. Staff members and volunteers alike will pass on information if they believe a child is at risk of harm, otherwise, staff are not obliged to break confidentiality.
- 4.3. In almost all cases of disclosure, limited confidentiality is able to be maintained.
- 4.4. Staff members and volunteers will use their professional judgement when considering whether to inform a child that a disclosure may be made in confidence and whether such confidence could remain

having heard the information, bearing in mind that staff can never guarantee absolute confidentiality to pupils.

- 4.5. The headteacher is to be informed of all incidents regarding child protection concerns which are highlighted by a volunteer, parent or another external party to the school.
- 4.6. Staff members are contractually obliged to immediately inform the headteacher of any concerns regarding a pupil's safety or welfare.
- 4.7. Any concerns raised over a child's welfare and safety will be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as early as possible.
- 4.8. Staff members are not obliged to inform the police on most matters relating to illegal activity, such as illegal drugs or assaults. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the support of the SLT.



Sharing information

- 5.1. The school takes the stance that all information about individual pupils is private and should only be shared with other professionals who have a legitimate need to know.
- 5.2. Under no circumstances will personal information about pupils, staff members or the school be passed on indiscriminately.
- 5.3. Under no circumstances will information regarding the school's finances be shared with anyone, other than those with a legitimate need to know.
- 5.4. If members of staff, volunteers or cooperating external parties share unsuitable or misrepresented information, the school withholds the right to take the appropriate civil, legal or disciplinary action.
- 5.5. The safety and protection of pupils, as well as the school, is the paramount consideration in all confidentiality decisions.
- 5.6. All non-teaching staff and volunteers will report disclosures of a concerning personal nature to the DSL as soon as possible and in an appropriate setting.
- 5.7. All external visitors will be made aware of the Staff and Volunteer Confidentiality Policy and act in accordance with it when dealing with information, particularly sensitive information, regarding the school, its pupils and parents.
- 5.8. All data will be processed and held in line with the school's Data Protection Policy. In the event of information and data being shared with external or inappropriate parties, the individual responsible will be liable for disciplinary or legal action in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.
- 5.9. The school will be open and honest with all individuals about how and why data is shared, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- 5.10. Where necessary, advice will be sought from the DPO and other practitioners to ensure all data is shared correctly.
- 5.11. Where possible, information is shared with consent from the data subject, unless the school is able to proceed without consent under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, e.g. if the data subject's safety is at risk.

- 5.12. Individuals' safety and wellbeing will form the base of all information sharing decisions, and information will not be shared if anyone's safety or wellbeing could be compromised.
- 5.13. Only information that is necessary for the purpose it is being shared for will be shared.
- 5.14. All decisions and reasons for sharing data will be recorded by the DPO.



Breaking confidentiality

- 6.1. When confidentiality must be broken because a child may be at risk of harm, in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the school will ensure the following:
- Pupils are told when information has been passed on
 - Pupils are kept informed about what will be done with their information
 - To alleviate their fears concerning the information becoming common knowledge, pupils are told exactly who their information has been passed on to
- 6.2. If confidential information is shared with the explicit consent of the individuals involved, and they are informed of the purpose of sharing the information in question, there will be no breach of confidentiality or of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 6.3. In the event that explicit consent for sharing confidential information is not gained, an individual will satisfy themselves that there are reasonable grounds to override the duty of confidentiality in these circumstances before sharing the data.
- 6.4. The school recognises that overriding public interest is a justifiable reason to disclose information; however, permission from the headteacher will be sought prior to disclosing any information regarding the school.
- 6.5. Staff should act in accordance with the school's Whistleblowing Policy at all times.
- 6.6. Individuals who disclose information, after previously signing the school's code of conduct, may face further action, including legal action.
- 6.7. Staff in breach of this policy may face disciplinary action, if it is deemed that confidential information was passed on to a third party without reasonable cause.



Accessing information

- 7.1. In accordance with article 15 of the GDPR, personal information, such as educational records, can be shared via a subject access request (SAR).
- These requests must be made in writing to the governing board and will be responded to within 15 school days if the request is regarding an educational record.
 - If the data being requested is not in relation to an educational record, the response must be within one calendar month.
 - Pupils, or the parent of a pupil, have the right to access the information that the school holds about the child in question.
 - Some types of personal data are exempt from the right of a SAR and so cannot be obtained by making a SAR. Information may be exempt because of its nature or because of the effect its disclosure is likely to have.
 - Information regarding another individual must not be disclosed in a SAR.

- Individual requests for non-personal information cannot be treated as a SAR but will be dealt with as a freedom of information (Fol) request.

7.2. In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, private data and public records can potentially be accessed through lodging an Fol request.

- These requests must be made in writing to the school, stating the name and address of the requester as well as a description of the information requested.
- Successful Fol requests will be responded to within 20 working days from receipt of the request, unless the request does not comply with the procedure set out in the school's Freedom of Information Policy.
- The school holds the right to charge the requester a fee.
- Certain information will not be shared, such as that explained in Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.



Monitoring and review

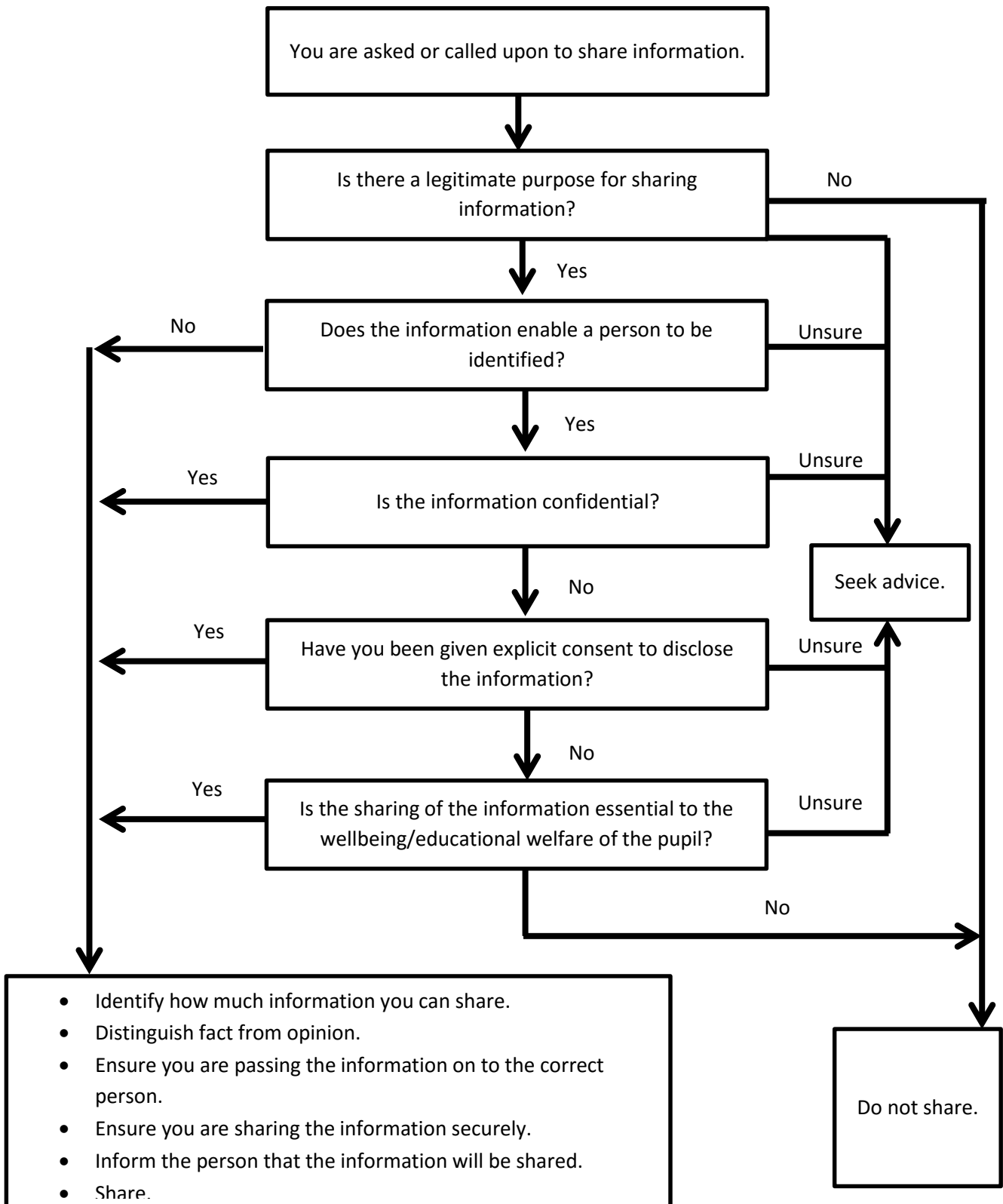
8.1. This policy is monitored for effectiveness by the headteacher and is reviewed annually, or where necessary in light of changes to the law or statutory guidance.

8.2. A record of information which has been shared will be continuously kept up-to-date.

- This record will state the premise of the information, whom it was shared with and the purpose for sharing it.
- The record will be kept in the school office and can be accessed by all appropriate staff members.
- On an annual basis, the headteacher and DSL will review the record to ensure that all reasonable measures to safeguard pupils and protect the reputation of the school are being taken.



Appendix A – Information Sharing Flowchart



Notes

- If there are child protection concerns, follow the relevant procedures without delay.
- Always seek advice if you are unsure whether to share information.