



St. Michael's School

Confidentiality Policy

June 2026

Introduction

This policy was drafted by the Principal in conjunction with the school's Child Protection Policy and other related policies mentioned herein for consideration by the Staff, Parents' Committee and Board of Management of St. Michael's School.

It is the policy of St. Michael's School to provide staff and pupils with privacy and confidentiality regarding all information concerning them and that this information will only be disclosed whereby deemed necessary in the best interests of the individual.

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 pupils and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection guidelines and good practice are followed.

Confidentiality pertaining to all school matters is of paramount importance to all those who work or visit our school, and especially those who are in contact with staff and pupils. This is imperative in the case of those who have direct contact with pupils who may be experiencing difficulties. This is a sensitive area requiring all involved to have due regard for the privacy and confidentiality of all.

Rationale

At St. Michael's School we believe that:

- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established. This is to enable pupils, staff, parents/guardians and others who are responsible for the care of children to seek help both within and outside the school. It is crucial that the number of situations when personal information is shared is minimal to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- Pupils, parents/guardians and staff need to know boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns.
- Issues concerning personal information including sensitive personal matters can arise at any time and all staff and pupils have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and/or other particular needs.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality, however, each individual needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community. Informed decisions will be made about the most appropriate person to talk to about any personal issues they want to discuss.

Relationship to School Ethos

We provide a secure, healthy and caring environment which values the uniqueness of each person. (Mission Statement)

Aims

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect and support the well-being of pupils and staff at all times.
- Foster an ethos of trust within the school.
- Safeguard the well-being of those involved in the disclosure of confidential information. Where additional support is required the services of Spectrum Life Employee Assistance Scheme is available (Appendix 1).
- Reassure pupils/staff that their best interests will be maintained.
- Address issues which may arise with regard to confidentiality.
- Give all staff clear guidance.
- Ensure good practice throughout the school understood by pupils, parents/guardians and staff.
- Develop creative and positive ways for the pupil's voice to be heard whilst recognising the responsibility to use, hold and safe-guard information received.
- Protect the good name, integrity and reputation of the school, pupils, staff and parents.

Objectives

With this policy, St. Michael's School strives to:

- Provide a consistent approach in school regarding handling information about pupils once it has been received.
- Ensure that staff, parents/guardians and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
- Encourage pupils to be aware of confidentiality issues relating to their peers and themselves.
- Encourage pupils to talk to their parents/guardians and carers.
- Ensure that pupils and parents/guardians know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- Ensure that parents/guardians have a right of access to any records the school may hold on to their child but not to any other child for whom they do not have parental responsibility.

Definition of Confidentiality

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.

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.

Guidelines

- Information about individual pupils is private and should only be shared with staff who need to know. Confidential information shall only be shared on a professional "need to know" basis and only where necessary to support the education, care, welfare, safety or safeguarding of a pupil, to fulfil a legal obligation, or to enable staff to carry out their professional duties. Staff are expected to exercise professional judgement and discretion at all times when handling confidential information. All social services, medical and personal information about a pupil are held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.

- Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as Circle Time and other SPHE sessions dealing with any sensitive issues.
- The school prides itself on good communication with parents/guardians and staff are available to talk to both pupils and parents/guardians about issues that are causing concern. The school encourages pupils to talk to parents/guardians about issues causing them concern and may in some cases support the pupils to talk to their parents/guardians.
- We recognise that sometimes there may be family issues which might affect a pupil and which the family will only disclose to us if they can be sure the information will be treated confidentially. We will respect the wishes of the family and where it is felt necessary to share the information given to us, this will be discussed with the parent first unless a pupil is considered to be at immediate risk and/or there is an overriding child protection concern.
- All personal information with regard to pupils, parents/guardians and staff is treated with appropriate discretion. This expectation extends to all forms of communication including face-to-face conversations, meetings, telephone calls, emails, digital platforms, electronic records, messaging services and social media. Staff must ensure that confidential or sensitive information is not discussed in inappropriate settings or with individuals who do not have a legitimate professional reason to access such information. All private and personal matters are dealt with in as discrete and sensitive a manner as possible. It is important that:
 - Staff be aware of pupils with medical needs. This information is accessible to staff.
 - Staff do not discuss details of individual cases arising in staff meetings with any person without direct professional connection to and interest in the welfare and education of the individual concerned.
 - No member of staff discusses an individual pupil's behaviour or personal matters in the presence of pupils.
 - Staff do not enter into detailed discussion about a pupil's behaviour with other pupils or their parents/guardians.
 - Matters of Child Protection are made known to staff on a need-to-know basis.
 - It is important that staff members are aware of some confidential matters in order to support individuals. These staff will respect the sensitivity of such cases and not divulge information to people unconnected professionally with the individual concerned.
 - When students on work placement are working with pupils, they do not discuss any matters relating to pupils outside the particular classroom. Any issues that may arise should be brought directly to the Class Teacher.
 - Students on work placement do not have access to pupils' files.
 - In the event of a student on work placement looking to complete a course assignment regarding one of the pupils, written parental consent is sought, and the pupil's name and personal details are not divulged in the assignment.

- Temporary teachers, substitute teachers and SNAs where deemed necessary and students on work placement are asked to read this policy before working in school.
- All staff can normally expect that their personal situations and health will remain confidential unless:
 - It impinges on the terms of their contract.
 - It endangers pupils or other members of staff.
 - There is a legal obligation to disclose such information.
 - It is necessary for legal proceedings.
 - Despite the duty of confidence, the staff member's interest or wider public interest justifies disclosure.
- Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, will remain confidential to the Chairperson, Principal and independent assessor approved by the Archbishop's House.
- The Principal and secretary are responsible for inputting absences on the On-Line Claim System. Details of absences are strictly confidential and are not divulged to other staff members.
- Sensitivity by all staff regarding absenteeism of other staff members is expected. Staff are expected to maintain professional standards of communication and conduct in relation to colleagues, pupils and families. Confidentiality includes respecting the dignity, reputation and professional standing of others. Discussions regarding colleagues should be conducted respectfully, appropriately and only where there is a legitimate professional purpose. Concerns regarding staff members should be raised through the appropriate management structures rather than through informal discussion.
- Photographs of pupils are not used without parent/guardian permission. Refer to our Policy on Photographic Images.
- Information about pupils will be shared with parents/guardians but only about their own child. If an incident involves other pupils, no names are recorded on the Incident Report or given to parents/guardians.
- All personal information regarding pupils including PPS numbers is regarded as confidential. It should be clearly understood by those who have access to it, and whether those concerned have access to all, or only some of the information.
 - Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, social services minutes of meetings and reports, etc. are retained in the office on pupil files, available to relevant staff members.
 - Logs of administration of medication are retained in the office.
 - Addresses and telephone numbers of staff members will not be passed to other staff members without prior consent. Staff should not make available their personal contact details to parents/guardians or pupils.
 - Addresses and telephone numbers of parents/guardians will not be passed to other parents/guardians without their prior consent.

Other Professionals

Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality when working in a one-to-one situation. When working in a classroom, they are bound by relevant school policies. In line with best practice guidance, like school

staff, they will seek to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate personal disclosures in a classroom setting, by negotiating ground rules and using distancing techniques.

The school recognises that confidentiality operates alongside the principles outlined in the school's Dignity at Work Policy (part of our school's Welfare, Health and Safety Statement Policy), Working Together procedures, Child Safeguarding procedures and Data Protection Policy. All staff are expected to contribute to a culture of professionalism, respect, trust and appropriate information sharing in accordance with these policies.

Limits to confidentiality

Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. The pupil will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in information sharing. Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

When confidentiality should be broken and procedures for doing this

Refer to the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment and Child Protection Procedures for Schools, 2025.

Where the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment does not apply and a staff member is still concerned and/or unsure of whether the information should be passed on or other action taken the staff member should speak to the Principal.

Policy Links

Code of Behaviour

Bi Cinealta Policy

Substance Abuse Policy

Administration of Medication Policy

Policy on Photographic Images

Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Data Protection Policy (GDPR)

Dignity at Work Policy – Health, Safety and Welfare Policy

Working Together Procedures -Staff Code of Professional Conduct /staff contracts

Acceptable Use Policy for Staff

Acceptable Use Policy for Pupils

SPHE/RSE Policy and Wellbeing Statement

Roles and Responsibility

The Principal/Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal have responsibility for monitoring this policy.

Review / Ratification / Communication

This policy was originally ratified by the Board of Management in 2013 and was again reviewed and updated in June 2026 to reflect current legislation, child safeguarding procedures, data protection requirements and good practice guidance.

A copy of this policy will be placed in all Policy Folders throughout the school and will be available on Aladdin and on our school website (www.stmichaelsholyangels.com). A hard copy is also available from the office upon request.


Signed:
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 24th June 2026

Appendix 1-Employee Assistance Service / Spectrum.Life

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is arranged and managed by the Department of Education and provides school staff and immediate family members, i.e. partner, spouse or adult child (aged 18 and over) residing at the same address as the employee, with access to confidential counselling and assists in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. Counselling is provided on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma.

The service is free and confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to staff in schools. The service is provided by Spectrum.Life.

Contact Details:

Free Phone: 1800 411 057

The contact details for SMS are Text 'Hi' to 087 145 2056 and for WhatsApp is 087 3690010

Login to the [Spectrum.Life website](#)

See [here](#) to view the Spectrum.Life Employee Assistance Service flyer, which includes marketing distribution guidelines.

A flyer for the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) with a dark purple background. At the top, the title 'Employee Assistance Service' is in white. Below it, a subtitle states: 'Our Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is a confidential counselling service that provides wellbeing support.' The center features an illustration of a person with blonde hair sitting on a large blue heart, using a laptop. Surrounding this are several icons: a speech bubble with a checkmark, a 24/7 clock icon, an envelope icon, and two circular icons with grid patterns. The bottom section is divided into three columns. The left column lists availability and services. The middle column lists topics for signposting. The right column lists specific support areas. At the very bottom, there is a registration link and an organisation code.

Employee Assistance Service

Our Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is a confidential counselling service that provides wellbeing support.

Our EAS is available 24/7, 365 days a year providing:

- Counselling
- Online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Sign Posting For:

- Legal Information
- Financial Information
- Consumer Information
- Life Coaching
- Mediation
- Health Information
- Cancer Support
- Autism Support
- Infertility and Pregnancy Loss
- Elder Care Support
- Parent Support

On the initial contact, our case manager will complete a quick assessment when appropriate, our referral to short term counselling will be made.

Register for your wellbeing app: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login>

Organisation code: yVlIU17