

Confidentiality in school



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Confidentiality in school When working in a school you want your pupils to feel secure and happy and you want their parents to be confident that the children are in safe capable hands. A relationship of trust needs to be formed and confidentiality plays a big part in this. All schools will have a confidentiality policy stating that all personal information must be kept private and staff will be aware that they are not to discuss children's personal records openly.

There is also a legal requirement that all pupil/staff records are kept in a confidential and secure way. All files will be kept locked away and computer files will be password protected. It is important for parents to know that their children are being looked after and cared for by good people in their absence.

No one wants to leave their child with someone who makes them feel uncomfortable or at a place that doesn't feel welcoming. Building good relationships with pupils and their parents is part of the job when working in a school and being a parent myself I know how good it is to like your child's teacher and any TAs. Forming a good (working) relationship helps parents to work with you in ensuring the best education for their child. So it is important for parents to know that all information about their child and their family is kept confidential in order to help form a feeling of trust.

Knowing that all information is confidential will make a parent more likely to open up, so if there are any problems (at home or medical) that may impact on a child's education, hopefully they will be shared and detected quickly. Children/young people also need to be reassured that any information shared is confidential, as it is important for their well-being and

education that they feel comfortable in their setting. They need to feel that they can talk freely and express themselves, so that they can grow into confident adults. As a child/young person growing up, it can be difficult talking to parents (especially if your views are different to theirs!), so knowing that you can talk to your teacher confidentially could be a great comfort.

They may just need to ask for education/career advice or they could need personal advice on sensitive issues about growing up. More importantly they could be having problems at home that they only feel safe talking to the teacher/TA about. It is important that as a TA (or any staff member) you must let any child confiding in you know that you may have to share the information with another member of staff. It will then be up to them if they share information with you or not but if you don't make them aware, then you sharing information might break their trust in you and stop them from talking with you again. Most often it is possible to keep a child's confidence but if they say anything that makes you concerned for them, then it is important for you to be able to share this information with a senior member of staff. Working with children and young people as a TA you are bound to form certain relationships and bonds with some of the pupils where they only feel comfortable talking to you about personal things. This part of the job can be very fulfilling but can also be heart breaking, as these sorts of relationships can lead to you being the first to hear of some kind of abuse at home. It is in these cases that confidentiality must be breached.

You cannot investigate a disclosure of abuse alone, there are legal steps that must be followed, the first being to share this information with a senior

member of staff (class teacher or deputy/head teacher). Other than abuse there are still some times when personal information needs to be shared in school. Pupils (or staff) may have health issues that are necessary to share such as; asthma and allergies or a child with serious health issues will have a care plan. Care plans will contain a picture of the pupil along with personal information such as; contact numbers, care/medication to be given, and family information. Care plans need to be displayed where all staff members can see them, usually in the staff room. The Head teacher will let parents know that this information will be shared, which parents should be able to understand the reason why. Other issues such as, emotional problems (a death in the family, parent going away for work reasons, separation), family difficulties (trouble with neighbours/another family at school), who the child lives with and court orders (people who are not allowed contact with the child) should be shared on a need to know basis, therefore anyone who works in class with the child. Also any individual pupil needs will have to be shared with all who work with the child, class teacher, TA, supply teachers etc.

So though this information will still be confidential and not shared with anyone outside of the school, it is in the child's best interests for certain members of staff to be aware of some personal information.