



AQUINAS CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

We believe that:

The safety, wellbeing and protection of our students is the paramount consideration in all decisions taken by the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust (the Trust) and its academies in relation to confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between staff employed by the Trust is an essential element in ensuring our students' well-being and safety.

It is an essential part of our ethos that trust is established to enable students, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the learning environment and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure students and staff are supported and safe.

Students, 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.

The Trust and its academies' attitude to confidentiality is open and easily understood and everyone should be able to be secure in the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the Trust and the academies.

Issues concerning personal information including sex and relationships and other personal matters can arise at any time. Everyone in the Trust community needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality.

Everyone in the Trust community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals 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"

When speaking confidentially to someone, the confider has the belief that the confidant will not discuss the content of the conversation with another. The confider is asking for the content of the conversation to be kept secret. 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 by the Trust or its academies. We have tried to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our students and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where students and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that, when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and good practice is followed.

This means that 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 it 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 student will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and will be encouraged to do this for himself or herself whenever this is possible.

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both students and parents/carers (see note below) and any required actions/sources of further support or help available both for the student or parent/carer and for the staff member within the Trust and from other agencies, where appropriate. All staff should encourage students to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the student are paramount and staff will not automatically share information about the student with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

For further details of the Trust's safeguarding provision please refer to the Trust's Safeguarding Policy and the Child Protection Policy of individual academies.

The legal position for staff:

Trust staff should not promise confidentiality. Students 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 staff can or should give such a promise. The safety, well-being and protection of the student is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff make about confidentiality.

Staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue; however, we believe it is important that staff are able to share their concerns about students with colleagues in a professional and supportive way, on a need to know basis. This would help to ensure staff receive the guidance and support they need and the students' safety and wellbeing is maintained.

Staff are expected to respect the confidentiality of the Trust community as a whole and students. Therefore, the sharing of personal or sensitive information regarding a student with anyone outside the school community is not permitted. Should a member of staff be found to have disclosed confidential information to an inappropriate source then it will be dealt with through the Trust's staff disciplinary procedures. Staff should discuss such concerns with the appropriate designated safeguarding lead.

Staff, counsellors and health professionals:

Professional judgement is required by all staff at the Trust, counsellors or health professionals in considering whether they should indicate to a child that the child could make a disclosure in confidence and whether such a confidence could then be maintained having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement all staff at the Trust, counsellors or health professionals must consider the best interests of the child including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children and possible child protection issues.

All staff at the Trust receive basic training in child protection and are expected to follow the Trust's Safeguarding Policy and the individual academy's Child Protection Policy and procedures.

Volunteers (including AAC members) and Visitors:

We expect all volunteers supporting the Trust or an academy to report any disclosures by students or parents/carers of a concerning personal nature to the designated safeguarding lead 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 students and staff. The designated safeguarding lead will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, both to ensure the

student gets the help and support they need and that the member of staff also gets the support and supervision they need.

We expect all visitors to the Trust or an academy to report any disclosures by students or parents/carers of a concerning personal nature to the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear.

Parents/carers:

We believe 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 students can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a student does discuss a difficult personal matter with staff, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

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

There are some situations regarding child protection and disclosure where a decision not to inform a parent is necessary. This decision is only made on guidance from Social Services or the Police service.

Complex cases:

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, the designated safeguarding lead will consult with the local authority's Children's Safeguarding Service Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Staff and Volunteer Confidentiality

All information that:

- a) is, or has been, acquired by a member of staff employed by the Trust during, or in the course of their employment, or has otherwise been acquired by them in confidence;
- b) relates particularly to the business of the Trust and one of the academies within the Trust, or that of other persons or bodies with whom the Trust has dealings of any sort; and
- c) has not been made public by, or with, the Trust's authority;

shall be confidential, and (save in the course of the Trust business or as required by law) the member of staff shall not at any time, whether before or after the termination of their employment, disclose such information to any person without our prior written consent.

Staff are required to exercise reasonable care to keep safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information, and shall at the time of termination of your employment with the Trust, or at any other time upon demand, return to the Trust or an individual academy within the Trust any such material in your possession.

Similarly, volunteers who support the Trust or an individual academy are required to keep confidential all information regarding the Trust or an individual academy which comes into their possession as a result of their involvement with the Trust or an individual academy.