

## Earlscliffe (Sussex Summer Schools Ltd)

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Much of the information that follows describes what will happen if you (the student) need to tell some private or very personal things to a member of staff. You may ask for 'confidentiality', but while teachers and staff will always be discreet and keep things private, they cannot promise not to pass the information on to anyone. This is because the law gives them heavy responsibilities as adults who have care of you.

In lessons, teachers will not put pressure on you to disclose personal information, and will discourage your peers from applying any such pressure. For example, they will want you to be careful in a PSHE lesson when discussing sensitive or controversial issues such as those listed in the bullets below.

All personal information about you is regarded as private, and teachers will not pass it on indiscriminately (for example, they won't chat about you in the staff room). However, they cannot offer you or your parents unconditional confidentiality: by law, teachers must pass on (to senior staff or to the people or agencies who have responsibility for such matters) information about behaviour or events likely to cause harm to young people. These matters include:

- under-age sexual activity
- drugs use
- abuse
- other dangerous or illegal activities

Where teachers or staff have to pass on such information, or where they need to seek professional advice in order to help you, they will tell you what is happening, and who will have access to the information.

Depending on your age and maturity, teachers are not necessarily obliged to pass on information to your parents, though they will usually encourage you to seek support and help from them.

Our policy of is to work in partnership with parents in order to promote the welfare and education of children. The school also aims to build up relationships of trust between teachers and pupils. Children and parents should feel able to raise with the school private personal and family matters, including concerns about safety and welfare, in the knowledge that these will be dealt with sensitively.

The school will operate on the presumption that anything imparted in confidence will be treated in confidence. This undertaking is subject to three qualifications:

(a) A member of staff, to whom something has been told in confidence, has the right to seek the advice, guidance or support of his/her line manager or a senior colleague, when he or she feels the need to do so. Where a member of staff feels a matter is beyond their level of competence, it is proper for them to refer the matter to his or her line manager.

(b) If serious concerns are raised about the safety or welfare of a child, a member of staff must act within the school's Safeguarding Policy and is required to refer concerns or allegations to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, who may then decide to involve the Police or Social Services. A member of staff may only give an undertaking of confidentiality in so far as this is compatible with the principle that the child's welfare is paramount.

(c) Whenever possible, a member of staff will inform a pupil or parent when they feel they must pass on something told in confidence, and will explain their reasons for doing so. This would not apply in an emergency or where a child's safety or welfare could be compromised.

The school will not pass on information it has about pupils and their families to other individuals or agencies (except for (b) above), except with their permission, or where the information is already in the public domain, or where the school is obliged to do so by law or a court order. When a child moves to another school, we pass on the pupil's personal file as a matter of course.

Once a pupil reaches the age of sixteen, the school will deal directly with the pupil as well as with her parents. Information given to staff by a post-sixteen year old pupil will not usually be communicated to their parents without the pupil's permission, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### **Listening, Advice and Counselling**

People often say that there is a need for 'counselling' but do not really know what that means. A 'counsellor' cannot solve your problems but can listen, help you to look at the problem from every point of view, to understand your own feelings, to weigh up the alternatives and to make your own judgement about the action to be taken. Sometimes just getting things off your chest to a neutral person can change how you see things. Sometimes a problem needs to be discussed with the person you think is causing it, or with someone who can change things.

### **Help Available in School**

We take very seriously the need to provide care and advice for all its pupils. Group tutors and House staff accept that pastoral care is a most important part of that job: they will normally hope to be the first person you will turn to for help. Subject teachers, too, see pastoral care and support of their pupils as being an integral part of their academic role.

Any student may always approach any member of staff for help or advice. Teachers are used to balancing the various parts of their job and you can feel safe to trust them to be discreet and caring when helping pupils in difficulty.

You are advised to choose the person that you feel most comfortable with and who is best placed to help you. If you want to talk to the school's outside counsellor (independent person), you can ask the School Nurse who will arrange (in confidence) an appointment in a quiet and private room in school or a venue outside of school.