



Rockingham Montessori School Incorporated
ABN: 68 115 270 695

POLICY TITLE: Confidentiality Policy

BOARD APPROVAL DATE: July 2017

SIGNED BY CHAIR:

BOARD REVIEW DATE: July 2020

OVERVIEW

Rockingham Montessori School is committed to protecting the confidentiality and the confidential information of all staff, children and families at the school. The aim of this policy is to give all staff involved clear unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles and to ensure good practice throughout the school which is understood by children, parents/carers and staff.

This policy is to be read and applied in conjunction with all other RMS policies and in particular the RMS Privacy Policy and RMS Child Protection Policy,

RATIONALE

Rockingham Montessori School seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. It is committed to developing creative and positive ways for the child's voice to be heard whilst recognising the responsibility to use, hold and safeguard information received about the child and the child's parents or guardians,

Sharing information unnecessarily is an erosion of trust. The school is mindful that it is placed in a position of trust by all stakeholders and there is a general expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality,

Definition of Confidential Information:

Confidential information is all information that:

- must be treated as being of a personal nature (as defined in the RMS Privacy Policy);
- is of a nature that its release outside the school will impact on the good name or general wellbeing of the school as a whole, or individuals within the school (children, staff, families);
- is deemed to be confidential by the Principal or Chair of the School Board;
- is not in the public domain;
- was provided in circumstances which imply an obligation of confidence and privacy

OBJECTIVES

- To provide consistent messages in the school about handling information about children once it has been received.
- To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
- To ensure that staff, board members, volunteers, children, parents and carers are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
- To reassure children that their best interests will be maintained.
- To encourage children to talk to their parents and carers.
- To ensure that children and parents/carers know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure will be followed.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
- To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

GUIDELINES

1. All information about individual children is private and should only be shared with those staff that have a need to know.
2. All social services, medical and personal information about a child must be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
3. The school continues to actively promote a positive ethos and respect for the individual:
 - A. There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents and all staff have regular training on child protection issues.
 - B. There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse. Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable.
4. Parents/carers and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and that the school has a duty to report child protection issues.
5. The school prides itself on good communication with parents and carers. Staff is always available to talk to both children and parents/carers about issues that are causing concern. The school encourages children to talk to parents/carers about issues causing them concern and may in some cases support the children to talk to their parents.
6. Parents/carers and children should feel reassured that only in exceptional circumstances, or as required by law, will confidentiality will be broken.
7. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs. A lot of data is generated in schools by these categories and in these circumstances individual children should not be able to be identified.
8. Child protection procedures are understood by staff and training is undertaken every two years for all staff.

9. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work dealing with sensitive issues.
10. Even when sensitive information appears to be widely known it should not be assumed by those immediately involved, or who have knowledge of this information, that it is appropriate to discuss or share this information further.
11. Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should be accessible to staff who need that information. However, it must not be on general view to other parents/carers and children.
12. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, work and school reports at any time. However, parents should be aware that information about their child may be shared with the receiving school if they change schools.
13. All personal information about children including social services records are confidential and must be treated as confidential information by all those who have access to the information. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, Centrelink or other government agency reports will only be circulated in envelopes / files marked confidential and once read must be returned for secure filing.
14. In all other notes, briefing sheets etc. a child should not be able to be identified. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on to anyone, except in exceptional circumstances and then only with the Principal's authority.
15. Board members need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such discussions are confidential and must not be discussed with those outside of the Board. All papers containing such information should be marked as confidential. These confidential papers should be filed securely in the office.
16. Board members must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the School Board, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, children or parents.
17. All staff must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the Principal or the School Board, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, children or parents.
18. Board members and all staff will sign a confidentiality agreement annually.
19. Although decisions reached at board meetings are normally made public through the minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based are confidential. Board members should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the school board.
20. Staff should exercise prudence and consider the dignity of individuals during conversations on the school site, for example in the staff room, particularly if nonmembers of staff or children are present.
21. Non-members of staff, for example, students and voluntary helpers, will be asked to follow the principles of the Confidentiality Policy and sign a confidentiality agreement.

22. This duty of Confidentiality continues after the staff member, Board Member or volunteer leaves or ceases their engagement with the school.

ACTION TO PROTECT AGAINST BREACHES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

1. **Verbal breach of confidence:**

Confidential information about a child, parent, Board member, staff member or other school matter will not be discussed with other staff members, family members, friends or other people unless they are required to know that information to be able to carry out their duties.

2. **Visual breach of confidence:**

Information about a child, parent, Board member, staff member or other school matter must not be left in view of or provided to any other party. To avoid this possibility, the following action must be taken:

- Confidential files must always be stored in locked cabinets when not in use.
- Files will not be left out when the person working on these files is not present.
- When the files are on desktops, they must be left in a manner that ensures that confidential information is not visible to other people.
- Computer screens should be positioned in such a manner that confidential information cannot be viewed by an unauthorised person.
- Computers containing confidential information are to be appropriately secured and password protected.
- All faxes and emails will be treated as confidential documents and handled in accordance with these requirements.

3. **Auditory breach of confidence:**

Discussion regarding a child, parent, Board member, staff member or other school matter will not occur in the hearing range of others.

CONCLUSION

Rockingham Montessori School has a duty of care and responsibility towards children, parents/carers and staff. It also needs to work with a range of outside agencies and share information on a professional basis. The care and safety of the individual is the key issue behind this document.

APPENDICES:

1. RMS Confidentiality Agreement for Students/Work Experience
2. RMS Confidentiality Agreement for Volunteer Helpers
3. RMS Confidentiality Agreement for Staff and School Board Members

RELATED AND SOURCE DOCUMENTS:

1. RMS Privacy Policy
2. RMS Child Protection Policy
3. Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) March 2014
4. Education & Care Schools National Law Act (WA) 2012



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Confidentiality Agreement

Student/Work Experience

Please read the school's Confidentiality Policy.

This work placement / experience carries certain responsibilities on your part including the requirement of confidentiality about all school matters.

By signing this agreement, you agree to uphold Rockingham Montessori School's Confidentiality Policy. This means you will not share child / staff information with anyone that breaches or may cause a breach of confidentiality.

Examples of confidential information are:

- Information about staff, children or certain events that occur in school.
- Information accessed by 'privilege' e.g. notices on staff noticeboard/conversations.

If you see something in school that causes you concern, please discuss the matter with the Principal.

You must never use information about individual children outside the school without first obtaining parental permission (example: photographs / names of children / children's class work).

I accept and understand the information about my responsibilities as outlined in the RMS Confidentiality Policy. I understand that I may have access to confidential information and accept that it is my responsibility to maintain the integrity of this information and to keep it confidential and private. I further understand that disclosure of confidential information may result in me no longer being able to continue my placement at Rockingham Montessori School.

PRINT NAME OF STUDENT _____

Signature of Student _____ Date _____

Signature of school representative _____ Date _____



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Confidentiality Agreement

Staff and School Board Members

Please read the school's Confidentiality Policy.

The role of staff member or Board member carries certain responsibilities including the requirement of confidentiality about all school matters.

By signing this agreement, you agree to uphold Rockingham Montessori School's Confidentiality Policy. This means you will not share child/staff information with anyone other than those who are directly involved.

Examples of confidential information are:

- Information about staff and pupils.
- Information about actions of the School Board that are not published in Board minutes.
- Information accessed by '*privilege*' e.g. notices on staff noticeboard.
- Information about future school plans / actions that have not been disclosed to parents.

Agreement

I accept and understand the information about my responsibilities as outlined in the RMS Confidentiality Policy. I understand that I may have access to confidential information and accept that it is my responsibility to maintain the integrity of this information and to keep it confidential and private. I agree not to disclose any child/family/Board/staff/school information to any persons outside of this school unless I am specifically authorised to do so by the Principal or Chair.

I further understand that any significant breach of this confidentiality agreement may result in disciplinary action, including termination of my employment or termination of my position on the School Board. In addition, it may subject me to liability and responsibility for any legal damages resulting from my unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.

PRINT NAME OF STAFF OR BOARD MEMBER: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of school representative _____ Date _____



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Volunteer Helper

First of all, thank you for volunteering to be a helper at this school. Your help and support in this role is greatly appreciated. In this role you are supporting the life of this school. This role carries certain responsibilities on your part, including the requirement of confidentiality about all school matters of which you may become aware.

By signing this agreement, you agree to uphold Rockingham Montessori School's Confidentiality Policy. This means you will not share child/staff information with anyone that causes or may cause a breach of confidentiality.

Examples of confidential information are:

- Information about staff, children or certain events that occur at school. For example, a parent who knows you are a helper at the school may ask you how their child is getting on (e.g. academically/behavior). To prevent any misunderstanding, it would be better to advise the parent to speak to the class teacher.
- Information accessed by '*privilege*' e.g. notices on staff noticeboard / conversations.

If you see something in school that causes you concern, please discuss the matter with the Principal.

I accept and understand the information about my responsibilities as outlined in the RMS Confidentiality Policy. I understand that I may have access to confidential information and accept that it is my responsibility to maintain the integrity of this information and to keep it confidential and private. I further understand that disclosure of confidential information may result in me no longer being required to be a volunteer helper.

PRINT NAME OF VOLUNTEER _____

Signature of Volunteer _____ Date _____

Signature of school representative _____ Date _____