

ST PETER'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

Statement on Confidentiality

1. The College recognises the general right to privacy enshrined in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the obligations concerning the holding of personal data on individuals stipulated in the 1998 Data Protection Act, and is committed to uphold those rights and discharge those obligations.
2. The practical consequence of this is that information of a personal and private nature will not as a rule be passed on by members of College to others without the consent of the person or persons to whom it refers.
3. Nevertheless, the College also has a duty of care to all its members, and there may be circumstances in which there is a need for confidential information to be disclosed, in the interests of the person to whom it refers, or for the safety and protection of other people, or for the proper discharge by the College of its academic and non-academic responsibilities.
4. In such circumstances the consent of the person concerned will normally be sought and obtained, as when an academic tutor may need to make decisions about work expectations in response to a student's personal problems. Exceptionally there may be occasions when consent is not given but information is nevertheless passed on. Such relaxation of confidentiality should be on a strict 'need to know' basis, should be confined to the minimum practically necessary to secure the overriding interest, and should if possible be agreed in consultation with College Officers.
5. Details of medical consultations, and counselling, are covered by the absolute confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship and equivalent codes of practice in counselling and psychotherapy. Nevertheless it would be permissible, and often beneficial, for members of College to express concerns about a patient or client to the doctor or counsellor concerned, even though feedback would not be possible.
6. Since nearly all students are over 18, parents or families will not normally be contacted without consent. This rule may exceptionally be overridden when the student is not in a position to give consent and/or when such contact becomes practically necessary.
7. In making decisions about academic or non-academic discipline, the College will view students' personal problems with an appropriate degree of sympathy, and details of academic performance will be shared only on a 'need to know' basis.
8. Applications for help in respect of financial hardship will be treated on a strictly confidential basis, the sharing of personal financial information as a basis for making decisions being confined to the Bursar, the Master, the Chaplain and the student's academic tutor(s).
9. The obligation to respect privacy and confidentiality applies to all members of College.