SHREWSBURY HOUSE SCHOOL TRUST

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Policy owner:	Bursar
Approved by:	Executive Head
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Next review:	September 2026

1. Background

Data protection is an important legal compliance issue for Shrewsbury House School Trust (the "School") comprising Shrewsbury House School and The Rowans School. During the course of the School's activities it collects, stores and processes personal data (sometimes sensitive in nature) about staff, pupils, their parents, its contractors and other third parties (in a manner more fully detailed in the School's Privacy Notice). The School, as data "controller", is liable for the actions of its staff and trustees/directors/governors ("governors") in how they handle data. It is therefore an area where all staff have a part to play in ensuring we comply with and are mindful of our legal obligations, whether that personal data handling is sensitive or routine.

UK data protection law consists primarily of the UK version of the General Data Protection Regulation (the "UK GDPR") and the Data Protection Act 2018 ("DPA 2018"). The DPA 2018 includes specific provisions of relevance to independent schools: in particular, in the context of our safeguarding obligations, and regarding the right of access to personal data.

Data protection law has in recent years strengthened the rights of individuals and placed tougher compliance obligations on organisations including schools that handle personal information. The Information Commissioner's Office ("ICO") is responsible for enforcing data protection law in the UK, and will typically look into individuals' complaints routinely and without cost, and has various powers to take action for breaches of the law.

2. Definitions

Key data protection terms used in this data protection policy are:

- **Data Controller** – a person or body that determines the purpose and means of the processing of personal data, and who is legally responsible for how it is used. For example, the School (including by its governors) is a controller. An independent contractor who makes their own such decisions is also, separately, likely to be a controller.

- **Data Processor** – an organisation that processes personal data on behalf of a controller, for example a payroll or IT provider or other supplier of services with whom personal data may be shared but who is not authorised to make any decisions about how it is used.

- **Personal data breach** – a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data.

- **Personal information (or 'personal data'):** any information relating to a living individual (a data subject) by which that individual may be identified by the controller. That is not simply a name but any form of identifier, digital or contextual, including unique ID numbers, initials, job titles or nicknames. Note that personal information will be created almost constantly in the ordinary course of work duties (such as in emails, notes of calls, and minutes of meetings). The definition includes expressions of opinion about the individual or any indication of the School's, or any person's, intentions towards that individual.

- **Processing** – virtually anything done with personal data, including obtaining or collecting it, structuring it, analysing it, storing it, sharing it internally or with third parties (including making it available to be viewed electronically or otherwise), altering it or deleting it.

- **Special categories of personal data –** data relating to racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, health and medical conditions, sex life or sexual orientation, genetic or biometric data used to identify an individual. There are also separate rules for the processing of personal data relating to criminal convictions and offences.

3. Application of this Policy

This policy sets out the School's expectations and procedures with respect to processing any personal data we collect from data subjects (including parents, pupils, employees, contractors and third parties).

Those who handle personal data as employees or governors of the School are obliged to comply with this policy when doing so. For employees, breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action. Accidental breaches of the law or this policy in handling personal data will happen from time to time, for example by human error, and will not always be treated as a disciplinary issue. However, failure to report breaches that pose significant risks to the School or individuals will be considered a serious matter.

In addition, this policy represents the standard of compliance expected of those who handle the School's personal data as contractors, whether they are acting as 'processors' on the School's behalf (in which case they will be subject to binding contractual terms) or as controllers responsible for handling such personal data in their own right.

Where the School shares personal data with third party controllers – which may range from other schools, to parents and appropriate authorities – each party will need a lawful basis to process that personal data, and will be expected to do so lawfully and with due regard to security and confidentiality, as set out in this policy.

If you are a volunteer or contractor, you will be a data controller in your own right, but the same legal regime and best practice standards set out in this policy will apply to you by law.

4. Person Responsible for Data Protection at the School

The School has appointed the Bursar as the Data Protection Lead (DPL) who will endeavour to ensure that all personal data is processed in compliance with this policy and the principles of applicable data protection legislation. Any questions about the operation of this policy or any concerns that the policy has not been followed should be referred in the first instance to the Data Protection Lead.

5. The Principles

The UK GDPR sets out six principles relating to the processing of personal data which must be adhered to by controllers (and processors). These require that personal data must be:

i. Processed **lawfully, fairly** and in a **transparent** manner;
ii. Collected for **specific and explicit purposes** and only for the purposes it was collected for;
iii. **Relevant** and **limited** to what is necessary for the purposes it is processed;
iv. **Accurate** and kept **up to date**;
v. **Kept for no longer than is necessary** for the purposes for which it is processed; and
vi. Processed in a manner that ensures **appropriate security** of the personal data.

The UK GDPR's broader 'accountability' principle also requires that the School not only processes personal data in a fair and legal manner but that we are also able to demonstrate that our processing is lawful. This involves, among other things:

- keeping records of our data processing activities, including by way of logs and policies;
- documenting significant decisions and assessments about how we use personal data (including via formal risk assessment documents called Data Protection Impact Assessments ("DPIA")); and
- generally having an 'audit trail' vis-à-vis data protection and privacy matters, including for example when and how our Privacy Notice(s) were updated; when staff training was undertaken; how and when any data protection consents were collected from individuals; how personal data breaches were dealt with, whether or not reported (and to whom), etc.

6. Lawful Grounds for Data Processing

Under the UK GDPR there are several different lawful grounds for processing personal data. One of these is consent. However, given the relatively high bar of what constitutes consent under the UK GDPR (and the fact that it can be withdrawn by the data subject) it is considered preferable for the School to rely on another lawful ground where possible.

One of these alternative grounds is 'legitimate interests', which is the most flexible basis for processing. However, it does require transparency and a balancing assessment between the rights of the individual and the interests of the School. It can be challenged by data subjects and also means the School is taking on extra responsibility for considering and protecting people's rights and interests. The School's legitimate interests are set out in its Privacy Notice, as the UK GDPR requires.
Other lawful grounds include:

- compliance with a legal obligation, including in connection with employment, engagement of services and diversity;
- contractual necessity, e.g. to perform a contract with staff or parents, or the engagement of contractors;
- a narrower set of grounds for processing special categories of personal data (such as health information), which includes explicit consent, emergencies, and specific public interest grounds.

7. Headline Responsibilities of All Staff

Record-keeping

It is important that personal data held by the School is accurate, fair and adequate. Staff are required to inform the School if they believe that any personal data is inaccurate or untrue or if you are dissatisfied with how it is recorded. This applies to how staff record their own data, and the personal data of others – in particular colleagues, pupils and their parents – in a way that is professional and appropriate.

Staff should be aware of the rights set out below, whereby any individuals about whom they record information on School business (notably in emails and notes) digitally or in hard copy files may have the right to see that information. This absolutely must not discourage staff from making necessary and sometimes difficult records of incidents or conversations involving colleagues or pupils and parents, in accordance with the School's other policies, and grounds may sometimes exist to withhold these from such requests. However, the starting position for staff is to **record every document or email in a form they would be prepared to stand by should the person about whom it was recorded ask to see it.**

Data handling

All staff have a responsibility to handle the personal data which they come into contact with fairly, lawfully, responsibly and securely and in accordance with the Staff Handbook and all relevant School policies and procedures (to the extent applicable to them). In particular, there are data protection implications across a number of areas of the School's wider responsibilities such as safeguarding and IT security, so all staff should read and comply with the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Use of email, Internet and Communication Systems Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- Taking, Storing and Using Images of Children Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Storage and Retention of Records and Documents Policy

Responsible processing also extends to the creation and generation of new personal data / records, as above, which should always be done fairly, lawfully, responsibly and securely.

Avoiding, mitigating and reporting data breaches

One of the key obligations contained in the UK GDPR is on reporting personal data breaches. Controllers must report certain types of personal data breach (those which risk an impact to individuals) to the ICO within 72 hours. Please refer to the Trust's Data breach policy.

In addition, controllers must notify individuals affected if the breach is likely to result in a "high risk" to their rights and freedoms. In any event, the School must keep a record of any personal data breaches, regardless of whether we need to notify the ICO. If staff become aware of a personal data breach, they must immediately notify the Data Protection Lead. If staff are in any doubt as to whether to report something internally, it is always best to do so. A personal data breach may be serious, or it may be minor; and it may involve fault or not; but the School always needs to know about them to make a decision.

As stated above, the School may not need to treat the incident itself as a disciplinary matter – but a failure to report could result in significant exposure for the School, and for those affected, and could be a serious disciplinary matter whether under this policy or the applicable staff member's contract.

Care and data security

More generally, we require all School staff (and expect all our contractors) to remain mindful of the data protection principles (see section 3 above), and to use their best efforts to comply with those principles whenever they process personal information. Data security is not simply an online or digital issue but one that affects daily processes: filing and sending correspondence, notably hard copy documents. Data handlers should always consider what their most assured and secure means of delivery is, and what the consequences would be of loss or unauthorised access.

We expect all those with management / leadership responsibilities to be particular champions of these principles and to oversee the swift reporting of any concerns about how personal information is used by the School to the Data Protection Lead, and to identify the need for (and implement) regular staff training. Staff must attend any training we require them to.

Use of third party platforms / suppliers

As noted above, where a third party is processing personal data on the School's behalf it is likely to be a data 'processor', and this engagement must be subject to appropriate due diligence and contractual arrangements (as required by the UK GDPR). It may also be necessary to complete a DPIA before proceeding – particularly if the platform or software involves any sort of novel or high risk form of processing (including any use of artificial intelligence ("AI") technology). Any request to engage a third party supplier should be referred to the Data Protection Lead in the first instance, and at as early a stage as possible.

8. Rights of Individuals

In addition to the School's responsibilities when processing personal data, individuals have certain specific rights, perhaps most significantly that of access to their personal data held by a controller (i.e. the School). This is known as the 'subject access right' (or the right to make 'subject access requests'). Such a request must be dealt with promptly and does not need any formality, nor to refer to the correct legislation. If you become aware of a subject access request (or indeed any communication from an individual about their personal data), you must tell the Data Protection Lead as soon as possible.

Individuals also have legal rights to:

- require us to correct the personal data we hold about them if it is inaccurate;
- request that we erase their personal data (in certain circumstances);
- request that we restrict our data processing activities (in certain circumstances);
- receive from us the personal data we hold about them for the purpose of transmitting it in a commonly used format to another data controller; and
- object, on grounds relating to their particular situation, to any of our particular processing activities where the individual feels this has a disproportionate impact on them.

None of the above rights for individuals are unqualified and exceptions may well apply. However, certain rights are absolute and must be respected, specifically the right to:

- object to automated individual decision-making, including profiling (i.e. where a significant decision is made about the individual without human intervention);
- object to direct marketing; and
- withdraw one's consent where we are relying on it for processing their personal data (without affecting the lawfulness of processing carried out prior to that point in reliance on consent, or of any processing carried out on some other legal basis other than consent).

In any event, however, if you receive a request from an individual who is purporting to exercise one or more of their data protection rights, you must tell the Data Protection Lead as soon as possible.

9. Data Security: Online and Digital

The School must ensure that appropriate security measures are taken against unlawful or unauthorised processing of personal data, and against the accidental loss of, or damage to, personal data.

- No member of staff should provide personal data of pupils or parents to third parties, including a volunteer or contractor, unless there is a lawful reason to do so.
- Where a worker is permitted to take data offsite on memory sticks or personal devices it will need to be encrypted.
- Use of personal email accounts or unencrypted personal devices by governors or staff for official School business is not permitted.

10. Data Subject Complaints

Individuals have the right to make a complaint directly to us if they believe their data protection rights have been breached. We will acknowledge receipt within 30 days and provide a substantive response without undue delay. If you are not satisfied with our response, you may escalate the matter to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

Further information about how the School handles data protection complaints can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy. Complaints can be made in writing to the Trust Bursar: bursar@shstrust.net

Summary

It is in everyone's interests to get data protection right and to think carefully about data protection issues: this means handling all personal information with which you come into contact fairly, lawfully, securely and responsibly.

A good rule of thumb here is to ask yourself questions such as:

- Would I be happy if my own personal information were being used (for example, shared with a third party) in the way I am proposing? Would I expect it?
- Would I wish to stand by how I have recorded this information in an email or official record if the person concerned was able to see it?
- What would be the consequences of my losing or misdirecting this personal data?

Data protection law is therefore best seen not as oppressive red tape, or a reason not to do something necessary or important, but a code of useful and sensible checks and balances to improve how we handle and record personal information and manage our relationships with people. This is an important part of the School's culture and all its staff and representatives need to be mindful of it.

Appendix 1 - Data Protection Complaints Procedure

Under Data Protection Law, individuals have the right to raise concerns or make complaints about the way their personal data has been handled. This includes concerns about how the School collects, stores, uses, shares, or secures personal data, as well as how the School has responded to a previous data protection related request (for example, a Subject Access Request).

The purpose of this right is to ensure that individuals can easily challenge potential non-compliance, seek clarification or correction, and help the School to continually improve its data protection practices.

This document provides guidance for staff on how to handle data protection complaints and for individuals on how to submit one.

Failure to address data protection complaints appropriately can expose the School to enforcement action by the ICO and reputational risk. The School therefore treats all complaints seriously and follows this procedure.

What is a Data Protection Complaint?

A data protection complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction from an individual (or their authorised representative) about how the School has processed their personal data or handles a data protection request.

Examples include complaints about:

- Inaccurate, incomplete, or outdated information being held.
- Personal data being used or shared without lawful basis.
- A delay or failure to respond to a Subject Access Request or other data rights request.
- Inappropriate disclosure or loss of personal data.
- Lack of transparency in how data is collected or used.
- Concerns about automated decision-making or profiling.
- Any other alleged breach of the UK GDPR or Data Protection Act 2018.

A complaint does not need to reference “data protection” or “UK GDPR” to be valid; any statement indicating concern about how personal data has been handled must be treated as such.

How to Make a Data Protection Complaint

Individuals can make a complaint verbally or in writing (by email or letter). To help ensure a full and efficient investigation, complainants are encouraged to email the Bursar: bursar@shstrust.net providing the following:

- Their name and contact details.
- A clear description of the concern.
- Any relevant dates, correspondence, or evidence.
- The outcome they seek.

Acknowledging and Investigating a Complaint

The School will acknowledge the complaint within 30 days of receipt. The acknowledgment will confirm that the complaint has been received, outline the next steps, and confirm the point of contact investigating the complaint.

In order to investigate the complaint fairly and proportionately, the investigator will:

- Gather the necessary information, seek clarification and consider all relevant facts.
- Speak to relevant members of staff.
- Compare the information gathered and facts established with the complainant.
- Check that the School has upheld its own terms, policies and standards.

Where clarification or additional evidence is required to investigate the complaint properly, the response timeframe indicated in the acknowledgement may be paused until sufficient information has been provided. All complaints will be handled confidentially and investigated promptly, fairly and proportionately.

The School will aim to provide a substantive response as soon as reasonably practicable. The investigation may involve consultation with relevant departments, review of systems or records, and advice from the School DPL (Data Protection Lead).

Outcome of a Complaint

Following investigation, the School will provide a written response setting out:

- The findings of the investigation.
- Any corrective or preventative action the School will take (if appropriate).
- The right to escalate the matter to the ICO if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Complaints Received During School Closure Periods

The School will endeavour to acknowledge and investigate complaints as soon as reasonably practicable. However, during school closure periods, some offices and systems may not be routinely monitored, which could delay acknowledgment and investigation. Where a complaint is received during such a period, the School will:

- Record the date of receipt;
- Acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible; and,
- Provide an update to the complainant once the School reopens.

Complainants who require an urgent response are encouraged to submit their complaint during term time wherever possible.

Record Keeping

The School will maintain a record of all data protection complaints, including:

- The date the complaint was received.
- The date the complaint was acknowledged.

- The complainant's name.
- The nature of the complaint.
- Key investigative steps taken.
- The outcome and date of response.
- Any follow-up actions taken.

Records will be retained in accordance with the School's Records Retention Schedule.