



HOLMEWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

'Kindness, aspiration & self-belief'

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Holder	The Bursar
Date Approved	May 2026
Governor Approval	Full Board
Date for next review	May 2027

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Data protection is an important legal compliance issue for Holmewood House 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, suppliers 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, Governors and trustees 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 is sensitive or routine.

UK data protection law consists primarily of the UK version of the General Data Protection Regulation (the 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 and will typically look into individuals' complaints routinely and without cost, and has various powers to take action for breaches of the law.

Those who are involved in the processing of personal data are obliged to comply with this policy when doing so. Accidental breaches will happen and may not be a disciplinary issue, but

any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action. This policy may be amended at any time.

Key Data Protection Terms

- **Data controller:** an organisation that determines the purpose and means of the processing of personal data. For example, the School is the controller of pupils' personal information. As a data controller, we are responsible for safeguarding the use of personal data.
- **Data processor:** an organisation that processes personal data on behalf of a data controller, for example a payroll provider or other supplier of services.
- **Personal data breach:** a breach of security leading to 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), including name, identification number, location or online identifier such as an email address. Note that personal information created in the ordinary course of work duties (such as in emails, notes of calls, and minutes of meetings) is still personal data and regulated by data protection laws, including the GDPR. Note also that it includes expressions of opinion about the individual or any indication of someone's intentions towards that individual.
- **Processing:** virtually anything done with personal information, 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.

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/trustees 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.

People Responsible For Data Protection In The School

The School has appointed DPO for Education [Home \(dpoforeducation.co.uk\)](mailto:Home (dpoforeducation.co.uk)) as the Holmewood House School Data Protection Officer (DPO) and an internal Data Protection Lead compliance@holmewoodhouse.co.uk who will endeavour to ensure that all personal data is processed in compliance with this Policy and the principles of the GDPR. 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.

THE PRINCIPLES

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

1. Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner;
2. Collected for specific and explicit purposes and only for the purposes it was collected for;
3. Relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purposes it is processed;
4. Accurate and kept up to date;
5. Kept for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed; and
6. Processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data.

The GDPR's 'accountability' principle also requires that the School not only process 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)

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, in most cases it does require transparency and a balancing assessment between the rights of the individual and the interests of the School.¹ 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

¹ Under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 certain purposes are 'pre-approved' as "recognised legitimate interests", meaning that this balancing assessment is not required. These include the prevention, detection or investigation of crime and safeguarding of children. See ICO guidance here: [Recognised legitimate interest | ICO](#).
This is a whole school policy including EYFS and Boarding *Data Protection Policy May 2026*

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.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF

Record-Keeping

It is important that personal data held by the School is accurate, fair and adequate. You are required to inform the School if you believe that your personal data is inaccurate or untrue or if you are dissatisfied with the information has been 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 (most notably in emails and notes) on School business may have the right to see that information. This absolutely must not discourage staff from recording necessary and sometimes difficult records of incidents or conversations involving colleagues or pupils, in accordance with other School policies, and grounds may sometimes exist to withhold these from such requests. However, the starting position is to **record every document or email in such a way that you would be able to stand by it if the person about whom it was recorded were to see it.**

DATA HANDLING

All staff have a responsibility to handle the personal data that they come into contact with fairly, lawfully, responsibly and securely and in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct 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
- Online Safety
- Acceptable use of IT
- Security & CCTV
- Taking, Storing and Use of Images
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Use of Smart Technology Including Mobile Phones
- AI 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.

REPORTING DATA BREACHES

One of the key new obligations contained in the GDPR is on reporting personal data breaches. Data controllers must report certain types of personal data breach (those which risk an impact to individuals) to the ICO within 72 hours.

In addition, data 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 you become aware of a personal data breach, you must notify the Data Protection Lead as soon as you become aware of the issue and certainly within 24hrs. If staff are in any doubt as to whether or not you should report something, 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 staff member's contract.

CARE AND DATA SECURITY

More generally, we require all School staff to remain conscious of the data protection principles as outlined above, to attend any training we require them to, 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 effects daily processes: filing and sending correspondence, notably hard copy documents. Staff should always consider what the 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 and 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 / DPO 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 IT Manager in the first instance, and at as early a stage as possible.

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 data 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;
- 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;
- contest or seek human intervention in cases of solely automated individual decision-making (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).

The above rights for individuals are generally subject to exceptions or exemptions rather than functioning as absolute rights and so they do require careful assessment before the school responds.

If you receive a request from an individual who is purporting to exercise one or more of their data protection rights, or making a complaint about something data protection related, you must tell the Data Protection Lead as soon as possible as these rights are subject to statutory requirements including as regards the timeframes for responding.

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. See also the School's IT use policy and remote working policy:

- No member of staff is permitted to remove personal data from School premises, whether in paper or electronic form and wherever stored, without prior consent of the Bursar.
- 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/trustees or staff for official School business is not permitted.

Processing Of Financial / Credit Card Data

The School complies with the requirements of the PCI Data Security Standard ("PCI DSS"). Staff who are required to process credit card data must ensure that they are aware of and comply with the most up to date PCI DSS requirements. If you are unsure in this regard, please seek further guidance from the Bursar. Other categories of financial information, including bank details and salary, or information commonly used in identity theft (such as national insurance numbers or passport details) may not be treated as legally sensitive but can have material impact on individuals and should be handled accordingly.

SUMMARY

It is in everyone's interest 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 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.

Key Contacts

The Bursar: compliance@holmewoodhouse.co.uk

Data Protection Lead: compliance@holmewoodhouse.co.uk

Data Protection Officer: andy@dpoforeducation.co.uk

