



May 2011

Dear Parent / Guardian

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Schools, Local Authorities (LAs), the Department for Education (DfE), the government department which deals with education, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) all process information on pupils in order to run the education system, and in doing so have to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. This means, among other things that the data held about pupils must only be used for specific purposes allowed by law. We are therefore writing to tell you about the types of data held, why that data is held, and to whom it may be passed on.

The **school** holds information on pupils in order to support their teaching and learning, to monitor and report on their progress, to provide appropriate pastoral care, and to assess how well the school as a whole is doing. This information includes contact details, National Curriculum assessment results, attendance information, characteristics such as ethnic group, special educational needs and any relevant medical information. From time to time schools are required to pass on some of this data to LAs, the DfE, the Department of Health (DH), Primary Care Trusts (PCT) and to agencies, such as QCA, Ofsted and LSC, that are prescribed by law.

The **Local Authority** uses information about pupils to carry out specific functions for which it is responsible, such as the assessment of any special educational needs the pupil may have. It also uses the information to derive statistics to inform decisions on (for example) the funding of schools, and to assess the performance of schools and set targets for them. The statistics are used in such a way that individual pupils cannot be identified from them.

The **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority** uses information about pupils to administer the National Curriculum tests and assessments for Key Stages 1 to 3. The results of these are passed on to DfES in order for it to compile statistics on trends and patterns in levels of achievement. The QCA uses the information to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Curriculum and the associated assessment arrangements, and to ensure that these are continually improved.

Ofsted uses information about the progress and performance of pupils to help inspectors evaluate the work of schools, to assist schools in their self-evaluation, and as part of Ofsted's assessment of the effectiveness of education initiatives and policy. Inspection reports do not identify individual pupils.

The Learning and Skills Council uses information about pupils for statistical purposes, to evaluate and develop education policy and to monitor the performance of the education service as a whole. The statistics (including those based on information provided by the QCA) are used in such a way that individual pupils cannot be identified from them. On occasion information may be shared with other Government departments or agencies strictly for statistical or research purposes only.

The **Department for Education** uses information about pupils for statistical purposes, to evaluate and develop education policy and to monitor the performance of the education service as a whole. The statistics (including those based on information provided by the QCA) are used in such a way that individual pupils cannot be identified from them. Sometimes information may be shared with other Government departments or agencies strictly for statistical or research purposes only.

Under the Data Protection Act pupils have certain rights, including a general right of access to personal data held on them. Parents exercise this right on their behalf if they are too young to do so themselves. If your child wishes to access their personal data, or you wish to do so on their behalf, then please contact the relevant organisation in writing:

In the first instance this would be the school at the address shown on this letter.

For any other enquiries you may need to contact one of the following: -

- the LA's Data Protection Officer at Shire Hall, Westgate Street, GLOUCESTER, GL1 2TP
- the QCA's Data Protection Officer at QCA, 83 Piccadilly, LONDON, W1J 8QA
- the DfE's Data Protection Officer at DCSF, Caxton House, Toothill Street, LONDON, SW1H 9NA

Please note that all rights under the Data Protection Act to do with information about your child rest with them as soon as they are old enough to understand these rights. This will vary from one child to another and you will wish to consider the position for your child, but, as a broad guide, it is reckoned that most children will have a sufficient understanding by the age of 12. We would therefore encourage you to share this letter with your child if they are aged 12 or over.

Separately from the Data Protection Act, DfE regulations provide a pupil's parent (regardless of the age of the pupil) with the right to view, or to have a copy of, their child's educational record at the school. If you wish to exercise this right you should write to the school.

The Connexions Service provide support and guidance to all young people aged 13 to 19 in Gloucestershire to assist them to achieve their full potential with regard to education, training and employment. For pupils approaching or above age 13 the school is required to pass on information to the Connexions Service. This information includes the name and address of the pupil and parent, and any further information relevant to the Connexions Service's role. However parents, or the pupil themselves if aged 16 or over, can ask that no information be passed on to Connexions. If as a parent, or as a pupil aged 16 or over, you do not want Connexions to receive information from us, then please contact the school within two weeks of receiving this letter.

Since, for pupils aged 16 or over, the right to ask for information beyond name and address not to be passed to Connexions rests with the pupil rather than the parent, it is particularly important that you share this letter with your child if they are of this age. The LA and DfE may also pass on to Connexions information which they have about your child, but will not do so if you (or your child if aged 16 or over) has notified the school that Connexions should not receive information.

Yours faithfully

Martin Doidge
Director of Support