

YourIG

Bringing Information Governance solutions to you.



Protective Marking

Information Governance (IG) Services.
Adopted January 2023
Reviewed January 2024

Protective Marking

Introduction

Good information handling will ensure that the School is meeting its obligations under the Data Protection Legislation. Each member of staff within school has a personal responsibility to ensure that information is kept safe and secure. To assist the school with keeping information safe, it is recommended that, where appropriate, information should be categorised depending on its sensitivity or confidential nature by using Protective Marking.

What is Protective Marking?

As a minimum, **all school information** must be handled with care to comply with legal and regulatory obligations and reduce the risk of inappropriate access.

Any member of staff handling information, which is of a sensitive or confidential nature, needs to ensure the document has the appropriate protective marking classification. This will highlight to the person receiving the information that they need to have appropriate controls in place regarding handling the information e.g. where it is stored, who it is shared with, how it is destroyed.

The Protective Marking Scheme is only intended for use with other **professionals** e.g. within school or when sending information to other schools, local authorities or public organisations. Protective marking is not to be used when sending information to parents / carers.

This scheme operates in conjunction with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Law.

Classifications

As from 2nd April 2014 the Government introduced the following classifications:

OFFICIAL
SECRET
TOP SECRET

Schools will only be using the '**OFFICIAL**' classification. The 'OFFICIAL' classification is for the majority of information held by a school, including that which is sensitive and must not be shared freely.

There is no requirement to remark existing information.

OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Official information refers to routine information that is held by the school such as policies, general letters about school activities or basic personal information that is held about pupils e.g. school reports, attendance information.

There is no requirement to mark routine OFFICIAL information, however, guidance should be available detailing the handling requirements of this information.

There is no requirement to explicitly mark routine OFFICIAL information.

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Certain information may be sensitive (as defined by Data Protection Law) or is confidential and should not be accessible by unauthorised individuals.

In these scenarios documents, reports, emails, letters etc should be marked OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE. Examples include information relating to:

- A pupil's SEN records,
- Investigations or child protection issues
- Disciplinary action
- Medical Information e.g. Doctor's reports

Information that is considered 'OFFICIAL SENSITIVE' is any information that could cause measurable harm and distress to an individual if disclosed inappropriately.

Marking Official-Sensitive Information

Security classifications can be added to information in many different ways but the most important thing is that the marking is clearly visible to anyone using or receiving information.

Protective marking can be added to:

- The top and bottom of documents
- The subject line or body of emails
- The front of folders or binders

Staff should be made aware of any special handling instructions.