

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations)

GDPR or General Data Protection Regulation comes into effect on 25 May 2018 to replace the existing Data Protection in use in this country and across Europe.

Partly due to the emerging criminality and new technology such as smart phones and the impact of social media, it was decided that the whole data protection process needed changing and strengthening. Additionally, to prevent problems the new legislation/regulation is to be standard across all 28 European countries, so that everybody within Europe can exchange data knowing that there is a common methodology controlling the privacy of the individual. The main function is that you have to keep your data safely within the jurisdiction of European Courts.

Schools handle a large amount of personal data. This includes information on pupils, such as educational achievement, medical information, photographs and much more. Schools will also hold data on staff including professionals working in school, governors, volunteers and job applicants. Additionally, schools handle what the GDPR refers to as special category data, which is subject to tighter controls. This could be race, ethnic origin or even trade union membership.

Personal data is already governed by existing data protection regulations, which ensures personal data is handled lawfully. However, the new GDPR has gone further and requires organisations to document how and why they process all personal data and gives enhanced rights to individuals.

In terms of schools, and the education sector, there's going to be much more of a focus on data protection. In particular, this will be emphasised by decisions made by the School Leadership Team when reviewing policies and bringing in new technology. The most significant difference between existing data protection and GDPR is the necessity to be able to prove compliance.

In simple terms, this legislation impacts on EVERYONE. In order for any school to obtain compliance, there is a need for full support by all staff, leaders, governors, parents and all third party partners. As with Safeguarding and Health & Safety, this is a school wide priority, led by the School Leadership Team. With training and support, all day to day activities identified can be adjusted to ensure that appropriate data protection becomes second nature to all.

Next steps...

- Revised privacy notices sent to all parents and staff.
- Revisions made to school data protection policy
- Newly worded consent forms to parents;
- Collation of third party compliance from school business partners
- Completion of information audit in school to ensure we manage data in line with guidelines

The school is required to appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO). It is their responsibility to ensure that we are making every effort to be compliant and adhere to the regulations and that we communicate this clearly to all. The school must risk assess what is or is not within the scope of compliance and all parties MUST be prepared to follow protocols which schools sets. Our school's DPO is Helen Pye at Northumberland County Council. If you have any concerns in relation to data protection or wish to make a subject access request, then this must be done in writing to Helen.Pye@northumberland.gov.uk