

## Confidentiality Policy

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Tanglin Trust School recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and supports the view that children and young people should be entitled to confidential support alongside safeguarding from harm.

Tanglin staff seek to adopt an open and accepting attitude towards children and young people as part of their general responsibility for pastoral care. Staff are committed to nurturing an environment where parents and children feel free to talk about any concerns or worries which may affect educational progress and that they will see the school as a safe place if there are any difficulties at home.

This policy applies when a student discloses private or personal information to a member of staff. Examples of situations where this might occur are:

- i) a student knows someone who is bullying others at the school but is unsure about whether to tell
- ii) a student starts sharing something very personal in a classroom situation
- iii) a teacher is talking to a student in a mentoring role
- iv) a student tells a member of staff that they are pregnant or sexually active
- v) a student informs a member of staff about domestic violence at home
- vi) a student talks to a member of staff about their knowledge of a crime e.g. shoplifting, assault

***This policy should be read in conjunction with the Counselling Policy, Child Protection Policy and the Policy with Regard to Illegal Drugs and Testing.***

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## 1. A definition of confidentiality and where this is appropriate

Confidentiality is an understanding that any information shared with someone in trust can only be passed on to a third party with the agreement of the person disclosing it.

**Please note, in this policy, a ‘disclosure’ is the sharing of any private/personal information. It is a general term and does not just relate to child protection issues.**

Staff hope that parents and children will feel free to talk about any concerns or worries which may affect educational progress and that they will see the school as a safe place if there are any difficulties at home. They have the right to a private discussion with a teacher or School Leader. In most cases, the contents of this discussion can be kept confidential.

From time to time staff are asked to complete confidential reports for other schools as part of a transition process or professionals (e.g. Psychologists) carrying out assessments authorised by parents. Such reports will be sent directly back to the organisation/individual concerned; they will not be shared with parents.

## 2. The limits of confidentiality

This school recognises that confidential discussions need to take place in a confidential environment. Public places such as the staffroom, the classroom and the playground are not, in general confidential environments. However, members of staff may not have 1:1 meetings with students in rooms where there are no windows or where blinds are drawn\*.

There are clear limits to confidentiality where members of staff are concerned about student safety, where information has been recorded on official school reports and where the school has a legal obligation to pass on information to relevant authorities.

**Any disclosure that may be an indicator of a child protection issue must be reported to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with the Child Protection Policy.**

Parents/carers and students have the right to view educational records upon written request. It is therefore not possible to guarantee the confidentiality of official school reports and records kept in the school management system (iSams).

The school will comply fully with any request for information from any government agency duly authorised to obtain such information

*\*1:1 meetings with students may take place in rooms which are fitted with CCTV. CCTV images are recorded but not monitored; no sound is recorded.*

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### **3. Responsibilities to Parents/Carers**

Where it is believed that the student may be at emotional or physical risk, or in breach of the law, staff will treat this as a potential child protection incident and alert the appropriate Safeguarding Lead. Wherever possible the staff member will inform the student beforehand, explaining why this is necessary.

Staff will encourage the student to inform and seek support from their parents/carers.

In most cases information provided by a student will only be passed to their parents/carers with the student's consent.

When the school chooses to inform parents/carers it will only be done if it is considered to be in the best interests of the child.

### **4. Parent Helpers and Other Classroom Support Volunteers**

Parent helpers and other classroom support volunteers will be made aware of, and abide by, the school's confidentiality policy.

If they have any concerns they must refer them to a member of staff. Any disclosure must be passed onto a member of staff.

It is essential that they understand why anything seen and heard in school must remain confidential. The governors reserve the right to withdraw the invitation to help if parents/carers/other volunteers fail to comply with this policy.

### **5. Staff roles and responsibilities**

All staff (teaching and non-teaching staff) will be made aware of the confidentiality policy and their entitlement to training and support in its implementation.

All staff are under a contractual obligation to uphold the policy as with all other school policies. Failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary procedures being followed.

Staff can seek advice and support for themselves when dealing with a disclosure whilst keeping the individual's identity anonymous. Each school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy), published in the Child Protection Policy.

The Safeguarding Leads, together with the Safeguarding Officer are also responsible for monitoring practice and for liaising with the CPD Director to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training.

### **6. Working with external agencies**

Anyone working with students from the school, particularly on sensitive areas of the curriculum, needs to be made aware of the school's confidentiality policy and child protection policy and must agree to comply with it should a student disclose.

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School staff and staff from external agencies will establish at the beginning of lessons dealing with potentially sensitive topics that it is inappropriate to disclose personal information during the lesson. Ground rules need to be agreed which ensure individuals do not pressure one another to answer questions about their own experiences.

Staff will outline the sources of support available to any student who may wish to discuss the topics and/or their feelings further on a one-to-one basis. Unless there is a clear agreement to the contrary, a Tanglin member of staff will always be present in sessions delivered by external providers/ visiting experts.

This school acknowledges and supports the differences between the role of any non-school staff as educators, and as providers of information and support to students. The boundaries between these roles will be clarified and agreed prior to involvement. Any distinctions in terms of confidentiality need to be made clear to students.

## 7. *Illegal Activity*

In the case of illegal activity, the school will discuss the possible consequences with the student and seek the course of action with the most positive outcomes for the student.

The School will comply with any legal duty to report student offences to the authorities to the extent that such reporting is mandated by law.

## 8. *Recording Information*

Personal information about students, families or staff members (in physical or electronic documents) is kept securely, in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. Access to sensitive information is restricted to staff who require access for a legitimate purpose; access levels for different staff user groups is reviewed twice a year by the Management Team.

Physical records of a sensitive nature are kept under a 'double lock' system (e.g. locked cabinet inside a lockable office).

The school acknowledges that:

- Students and their parents/carers have a right to gain access to *processed* information concerning **their child** upon written request. Processed information includes reports and official records on ISAMS. It excludes child protection and vulnerable student records, to protect the welfare of the child.
- The school will comply fully with any request for information from any government agency duly authorised to obtain such information.
- Any information recorded about a student will be written in a way that assumes it will be read by either the subject or their parents/carers.

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## 9. Monitoring and review

The Education Sub-Committee (ESC) of the Governing Body must approve any changes to the Confidentiality policy.

The Leadership Team will ensure that the policy is reviewed on a regular basis (at least every 2 years) and that findings and recommendations are reported to the ESC, as necessary, if the policy needs modification.

## 10. Communication

The policy will be communicated to all school staff, governors, parents/carers, partner agencies and relevant visitors.

The policy will be included in the policy section of the TTS Portal – available to all parents and staff. The policy will be listed on the school’s website

## 11. Health Centre procedures and Confidentiality

There are Health Centre SOP’s giving specific procedures for working with students.

As part of the professional Code of Conduct (Singapore Nursing Board) nurses are obliged to uphold medical confidentiality:

**Value Statement 3:** Respect clients' right to confidentiality. Nurses/midwives shall maintain the confidentiality of all information relating to the health of their clients, obtained in the course of providing nursing care.

**Ethical practice points:** Nurses/midwives shall

- 3.1 Safeguard the confidentiality of all client-related information.
- 3.2 Disclose confidential information only as authorized by the client, unless there is risk of harm to the client or other persons, or when there is a legal obligation to disclose the information.
- 3.3 Maintain the anonymity of clients when disclosing confidential information in circumstances other than that stated in 3.2.

This is consistent with the legal duty of confidentiality to students in Singapore.

The nurse should always seek the child’s consent to disclose any confidential health information to parents and in appropriate circumstances to relevant members of staff. Nurses encourage students to discuss sensitive matters with their own parents/carers.

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It is usually reasonable that parents would be informed of injury and illness but there may be some sensitive matters that a student may not want their parents or the school to know, i.e. sexual, contraception, alcohol and drug abuse.

If a nurse considers it is in the best interest of the student to disclose information to the school and/or parents, they will endeavour to inform the student before doing so and to explain why this is necessary.

**Any disclosure that may be an indicator of a child protection issue must be reported to the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead, in line with the Child Protection Policy.**

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