



Symphony Learning  
TRUST

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# Confidentiality Policy 2016-2019

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Adopted by Symphony Learning Trust on	Autumn 2016
Next Review Due – Every 3 Years	Summer 2019

All schools within SLT are asked on occasions to keep information confidential. This can relate to a variety of issues and it is important that all schools follow the same clear and explicit policy. Pupils, parents and carers should be made aware of this and how it works in practice.

### **Rational**

- Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable in discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- **Everyone in the Symphony Learning Trust needs to know that no one can offer absolute confidentiality.**
- Everyone in the SLT community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the SLT community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health or personal issue they want to discuss.
- The safety, wellbeing and protection of the child are the paramount considerations in all decisions staff at all the schools make about confidentiality.
- Appropriate<sup>1</sup> sharing of information between school staff and SLT is an essential element in ensuring our pupils' wellbeing and safety.

### **Aims**

- *To provide clear guidance about the boundaries of the legal and professional roles and responsibilities of all staff with regard to confidentiality.*
- To ensure good practice throughout the SLT which both pupils and parents understand.
- To encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems.
- To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues.
- Ground rules and distancing techniques should be used where sensitive issues are to be addressed.
- Staff should not put pressure on pupils to disclose personal information and should discourage fellow pupils from applying any such pressure.

### **Personal disclosures**

Disclosures from pupils may take place at an inappropriate place or time. If this happens, the member of staff should talk again individually to the pupil **before the end of the school day**. The member of staff may be able to discuss the issue with an appropriate colleague, to decide on suitable action, without giving the name of the pupil.

### **Key Points:**

- Pupils should be reassured that their best interests will be maintained
- Pupils must know that staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality
- Pupils should be reassured that, if confidentiality has to be broken, they will be informed first and then supported appropriately
- Pupils should be informed of sources of confidential help, for example, the school nurse or support staff

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<sup>1</sup> Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, seek a consultation with the Schools Executive Head or Headteacher

- Any personal information should be regarded as private and not passed on indiscriminately
- If a member of staff receives information that leads them to believe that there is a child protection issue, they should follow the Child Protection Procedure and refer the case to a designated person (Executive Head or Headteacher)
- Pupils should be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers and be given support to do so wherever possible
- Government guidance requires professionals to consult as much as possible with parents about their children when referring to another agency. In general, parents should be asked if they wish to be referred, **UNLESS THERE IS REASON TO THINK THAT OBTAINING SUCH CONSENT MAY PUT THE YOUNG PERSON AT RISK**. If your referral is about child abuse (or the risk of it) rather than 'children in need', it is good practice to consult Social Services for advice **BEFORE** discussing the issue with parents, unless a parent has asked you to make the referral and is already aware of it.

### Further Guidance

For all children, parents, members of staff, governors and Trustees to enjoy privacy from gossip, for the school to be fair to all its community, and for children and adults to have disciplinary matters dealt with according to the school's own procedures and out of the eye of the wider school community, it is important that:

- Staff do not discuss details of individual cases arising in staff meetings to any person without direct professional connection to and interest in the welfare and education of the individual concerned.
- No member of staff discusses an individual child's behaviour in the presence of another child in school.
- Staff do not enter into detailed discussion about a child's behaviour with other children or their parents.
- Trustees/Governors, in particular those sitting on Disciplinary Committees, do not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual children) to any person outside the meeting.
- Parents in school, visitors or volunteers do not report cases of poor behaviour or pupil discipline to other parents in the school. This allows teachers to deal with such matters in line with school policy.
- At Trustees meetings, matters such as pupil exclusion, personnel issues and personal details of any member of the school community will be dealt with in the Executive Head/Headteacher's report. This is not for the knowledge of persons outside the Trustees or governing body meetings. Confidential minutes are recorded separately and are not published.
- Staff performance management will be carried out privately. Targets for individuals, named lesson observation sheets and other performance data will be in the Executive Head/Headteacher's office and electronic records will only be available from the Executive Head/ Headteacher's computer.
- Matters of Child Protection are made known to staff on a need to know basis.
- It is important that class teachers and support staff are aware of some confidential matters in order to support individuals. These staff will respect the sensitivity of such cases and not divulge information to people unconnected professionally with the individual concerned.
- When volunteers, such as parents and work experience students are working in classes, they should not discuss educational matters outside the classroom. For example, information on particular pupils or groups of pupils such as those with

- special educational needs. The provision and work with these children is for the teacher to discuss with the relevant parents or carers.
- Volunteers, students and supply teachers are asked to read this policy before working in school.

### **Equal Opportunities**

Staff may wish to discuss an individual case with a class or group. For instance it can support the inclusion of a child with Aspergers Syndrome or Autism, if their peers are made aware of the condition and so have some idea of what to expect. Similarly a child with visual impairment can be supported if his/her friends know how to look out for them in the playground. In such cases permission will be sought from the child and his/her carers.

### **Health professionals**

Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils provided they are competent to do so and follow the Fraser Guidelines (guidelines for doctors and other health professionals on giving medical advice to under 16s). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a pupil's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality when working in a one to one situation. When working in a classroom, they are bound by relevant school policies. In line with best practice guidance, like other school staff, they will seek to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate personal disclosures in a classroom setting, by negotiating ground rules and using distancing techniques.

### **Dissemination and implementation:**

This policy will be distributed to all teaching and non-teaching staff, including volunteers at the school.

All new staff, including volunteers, will receive a copy of this policy, together with basic training on the school's child protection policy and procedures.