



Confidentiality Policy

Introduction

All colleges are asked on occasion to keep information confidential. This can relate to a variety of issues including under age sexual activity, drugs use, abuse or other dangerous or illegal activities. It is important that the whole college follows the same clear and explicit policy. Students, parents and carers need to be made aware of this and how it works in practice.

Aim

- To protect the college community all times and to give the college workforce clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and professional roles in relation to sharing information and confidentiality, ensuring good practice throughout the college which is understood by the whole college community including families.
- To encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult if they are having problems.
- To give staff confidence to deal with sensitive issues.

In lessons

- Ground rules and distancing techniques should be used where sensitive issues are to be addressed.
- Staff should not put pressure on students to disclose personal information and should discourage fellow students from applying any such pressure.

Rationale

At Unity College we believe that:

- Issues concerning personal information can arise at any time
- It is an essential part of the ethos of the college that trust is established to enable students, staff and parents / carers to seek support both with, and outside the college. Therefore the college's attitude to confidentiality is easily understood and everyone should be able to trust boundaries of confidentiality operating within the college
- Students, parents / carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns.
- The safety, well-being and protection of students are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at Unity College make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between college staff can be an essential element in ensuring our students' wellbeing and safety. Information will not be shared unnecessarily.
- The college aims to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well being and protection of the college community, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where any member of the school community can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, good practice is followed and , when appropriate, safeguarding procedures

Definition of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is defined as '*something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs*'.

In practice there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our college. We strive to achieve a balance between ensuring the safety, wellbeing and protection of students and staff, ensuring that there is an ethos of trust where students and staff can ask for help and support when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection / safeguarding issues and good practice are followed.

This means that in most cases what is offered is limited confidentiality. Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances.

Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of a conversation. These limits relate to ensuring students' safety and well-being. The student will be informed if confidential information is shared for this reason, and will be involved in the information sharing process.

Personal disclosures

Disclosures from students may take place at an inappropriate place or time. If this happens, the member of staff should talk again individually to the student before the end of the college 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 student.

Key points

- Students should be reassured that their best interests will be maintained.
- Students should know that staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- Students should be reassured that, if confidential, help for example, the college nurse, counsellor, GP or local young persons' advice service, information will only be discussed with the relevant professional unless it is a Child Protection issue.
- Any personal information should be regarded as private and not passed on indiscriminately (for example in the staff room).
- If a member of staff receives information that leads them to believe that there is a child protection issue, they should refer the case to a designated senior leader DSL, or other DSL following a discussion with the young person involved.
- Students should be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers and be given support to do so whenever 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 the DSL, 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 students, staff members and governors to enjoy privacy from gossip for the college to be fair to all its community, and for students and adults to have disciplinary matters dealt with according to the college's own procedures and out of the eye of the wider college 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 student's behaviour in the presence of another student in college.
- Staff do not enter into detailed discussion about a student's behaviour with other students or their parents.
- Governors, in particular those sitting on Disciplinary Committees, do not divulge details about individuals (be they staff, families or individual students) to any person outside the meeting.
- Parents in college, working as volunteers or in any other capacity do not report cases of poor behaviour or student discipline to other parents in the college; this allows teachers to deal with such matters in line with college policy.
- At full Governing Body meetings matters such as student exclusion, personnel issues and personal details of any member of the college community will be dealt with as confidential items. These matters are not for the knowledge of persons outside the Governing Body meeting and will be minuted separately; the minutes will not be published.
- Matters of Child Protection are made known to staff on a need to know basis.
- 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 friends of the college are working in classes, they do not discuss educational matters outside the classroom, for example, the specific use of teaching assistant time for particular students or groups of students. Teaching assistants have different roles within a class, including the support of children 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 college.

Equal Opportunities

Staff may wish to discuss an individual case with a class or group. For instance, it can support the inclusion of a student with Asperger's Syndrome or Autism if their peers are made aware of the condition and so have some idea of what to expect. Similarly a student 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 and Agencies

Health professionals and other external agencies 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 college policies. In line with the best practice guidance, like other college staff, they will seek to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate personal disclosures in a classroom setting, by negotiating ground rules and using distancing techniques.

The Legal Position for College Staff

College staff should not promise confidentiality.

The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration in all decisions Unity College staff make about confidentiality.

College staff are not obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is, or may be an issue. However at Unity College we believe it is important that staff are able to share their concerns at any stage about student safety and well being . There are four designated child protection officers in place for staff to share concerns with at any time, along with a full time social worker.

Illegal activity

- Members of staff are not obliged to inform the police on most matters relating to illegal activity, such as illegal drugs activity or assaults.
- In the case of illegal activity , concerns should be passed to a child protection officer who will seek the course of action with the most positive outcomes for the child. This may be done in consultation with the head teacher or other members of the Senior Leadership Team.

College staff

Professional judgment is required by a member of the college workforce in considering whether he or she should indicate to a student's that the student could make a disclosure in confidence and whether such a confidence could then be maintained having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement, the staff member must consider the best interests of the child, including the need to ensure trust, and to provide safeguards for students .

All college staff receive basic training in child protection and safeguarding as part of their induction to the college and are expected to follow child protection and safeguarding policies.

External counsellors and health professionals

At Unity College we may offer students the support of an external counsellor.

The school nurse offers a drop in service for students.

These services are confidential between the counsellor or health professional and the individual student. No information is shared with school staff except as defined in the college's child protection / safeguarding policy. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our students.

Visitors (External organisations)

At Unity College we expect visitors to report any disclosures by students or parents / carers of a concerning nature to one of the designated child protection / safeguarding officers as soon as possible after the disclosure. The designated child protection/ safeguarding officer will then decide what , if any, further action needs to be taken.

Parents / carers

At Unity College we believe that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents / carers fully informed of their child's progress in school, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we understand the need to maintain a balance so that students can share any concerns and ask for support when they need it. When a student does discuss a difficult personal; issue with staff, the student will be encouraged to discuss the matter with their parents / carers and will be supported in doing so where appropriate.

When Information Must be Shared and the Procedures for Doing This

We will explain to the student that we must share information if we are worried that they are at risk of serious harm to themselves or causing serious harm to others.

We will also explain that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where a student needs urgent medical treatment or where a serious crime is involved.

In the first instance information will only be shared with a named member of staff – one of the child protection / safeguarding officers in college.

Students will be informed throughout the process who information is being shared with and the reasons why the information is being shared.

Support for Staff

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of students. At Unity College we prefer staff to seek appropriate support and advice rather than risk making a poor decision because they do not have all the facts or the necessary training, or allow college based issues to transgress into their personal life.

Staff should discuss any concerns with *Alison Hodgson, Bev Worthington, Dianne Taylor or Sally Cryer*

This Confidentiality Policy does not stand alone and the college has many other policies that support the Policy:

Safeguarding Policy	Procedures for Assessing Risk
Anti-bullying Policy	Induction and Code of Conduct for Staff
Racial Incident Policy	Intimate Care Policy
Harassment and Discrimination Policy	Safer recruitment Policy and Practice
Use of Physical Intervention Policy	Confidentiality
Educational Visits Policy	One to One Working
Intimate Care Policy	Children in Care
E-safety Policy	Equality
Health & Safety Policy	SEN Policy
Drug and Substance Mis-use Policy	
Behaviour Management Policy	
Child Looked After Policy	
Attendance Policy	

This policy is updated and reviewed on a regular basis.