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**Confidentiality Policy**

**March 2021**

**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.

**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 / cares 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 whereby 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 are observed.

**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 the with 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.

**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 six designated DSLs in place for staff to share concerns with at any time.

*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 one of the college’s DSLs who will seek the course of action with the most positive outcomes for the child. This may be done in consultation with the headteacher or other college DSL’s.

**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 safeguarding leads / safeguarding officers as soon as possible after the disclosure. The designated safeguarding lead / 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 Designated Safeguarding Leads 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, Shameem Hudson, Lauren Entwistle or Sally Cryer. Has this changed?*

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| Consultation has taken place | The school workforceDate: | StudentsDate: | Families Date: |
| Date formally approved by governors |  |
| Date policy became effective |  | Review date: |  |
| Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring |  |
| Links to other relevant policies | SafeguardingSENRace Equality | BehaviourPSHEE | Anti-BullyingSRE | Drug ed and incidentsVisitor |
|  | Data Protection Policy  |  |  |  |