Dear Parents/Carers

We wanted to give you important information before your child starts with us in September 2021. Usually, this would have been communicated at our transition evening in July but current events prevent this taking place.

We have tried to cover everything you may wish to know, but if you have any concerns or questions please do not hesitate to contact us at Unity via the contact details at the bottom of this letter. We are expecting a high volume of requests for information. Therefore, although we will endeavour to get back to you as quickly as we can, could we please ask you to bear with us if we do not respond immediately.

**Information for Parents**

**Communication**

At Unity College we use many forms of communication with parents/carers. It is vital that we keep up to date information including addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. If any of these change during the year, please make sure you contact college and let us know as soon as possible. We should have several numbers to contact in case of an emergency. We will always try and contact the first contact on our system but if this is not possible we do try to get hold of any other of the contacts.

**Parent App** - When your child joins us at Unity College, we will invite you to join Parent App. To do this we will need an up to date email address. This works on mobile devices and on desk top computers. It will enable you to see your child’s timetable, reward points, assessment reports and we will also be able to send you messages about current College events.

**School Day**

The college is open every day from 8am. All students should be in college by 8.40am each morning at the latest. Students enter the college at the front of the building through the student entrance. On arrival, any outside coats should be removed. Drinks, cereals and breakfast bars are available to be purchased in Bronte’s (the college dining hall).

(This is subject to Covid-19 restrictions being lifted)

If you are dropping your child off in the morning by car, you are more than welcome to come onto the college premises, drive around the turning circle and stop in one of the drop-off bays.

When collecting students at the end of the day, we ask that children are collected on the car park opposite the college site. At this time of the day, parents are **not allowed** to come onto the college site in cars as this puts the safety of students at risk. If you wait for your child on the car park opposite and stay with your vehicle, there will be no parking charge. The college car-park is manned at the end of the day and gates are closed.

If you have a meeting with a member of staff in college, then you may come onto the site.

If your child has a physical disability, you should ask for a carpark pass. These will only be allocated for a student who has a physical disability. If an adult is collecting a child from college and the parent has a disability, a pass **will not** be issued***.***

Head Teachers have the authority to discipline students in relation to poor behaviour on their way to and from college. Therefore, when travelling to and from college, we expect all our students to behave well. We have a very good reputation in our local community and any students who does not behave appropriately, will be dealt with appropriately according to our Behaviour Policy.

**Homework / Homework Club**

Satchel:One - This is the online platform used to set, record and submit homework tasks. Access to this platform is also available in APP form for mobile phones. On this platform, the homework can be viewed by students; documents can be downloaded, printed, and submitted via the website too. A paper copy of all homework can also be handed out to students in class if there is difficulty accessing the platform outside of college. Students and Parents can view upcoming deadlines which should help to manage and prioritise homework workload. In addition, students can message their teachers via the platform to ask questions and receive help with homework tasks. The platform records if students have submitted work on time and parents can view this too.

Unity College has a homework club, supervised by staff, that is open every day after college from 3.10pm – 4.20pm. All students are welcome.

**Parent Pay**

Parents can set up a secure account on Parent Pay using a current bank or credit card. The account allows you and your child to be cashless at school. Parents and students can pay for lunches, lockers, revision guides and trips with this cashless system. Parents can set up an automatic payment with the account that will top up funds when the balance drops below a chosen amount. This will not happen during school holidays so unused money will not mount up.

**Extensive Support for all Students**

All students will be allocated a Personal Development Tutor when they arrive at Unity College and they will usually stay with this tutor until the end of Year 10. They will see their PD tutor every day and the tutor will be the first point of contact for students and parents should support be needed with any academic or welfare issues. Each tutor group belongs to a House either North, South, East or West. Members of each house wear a tie sporting the colour of their house. Each student will be given a House tie by Mrs Cryer when they start in September so there is no need to purchase a tie.

The majority of students will be in a vertical tutor group which will include students from years 7 – 10. Some however, may be placed in a catch-up PD just for year 7 if we feel they need some additional support in Maths and English.

**Pastoral and Behaviour Support**

We have 4 House Leaders at Unity College who each look after the welfare and academic progress of students in their House. They work closely with their team of PD tutors and organise lots of activities, competitions and college trips. The house leaders for each of the houses are as follows:

North = Red = Mrs L Doney

South = Yellow = Mr R Boardman

East = Green = Mr M Cole

West = Blue = Mr M Williams

In addition to the House Leaders, we have 3 behaviour leaders in college who monitor the behaviour of students closely and work with parents to ensure students’ behaviour is appropriate and allows all students to learn. Behaviour leaders will contact parents immediately if concerns are raised about a student’s behaviour. We expect parents/carers to support college with any concerns around their child’s behaviour. We ask all parents/carers to read the ‘Unity College Behaviour Policy’ that has been sent out with the welcome pack and is also on the college’s website.

We also have a large, experienced Student Support team who work with students from all year groups. This team supports students in a variety of ways, helping with a range of different issues, including: mental health, bereavement, social and emotional issues etc. The team will support families where necessary and help to establish relationships with outside agencies if this is needed. We work very closely with many agencies such as Children’s Social Care and the Police. We will always work with the best interests of the child in mind. We have 10 trained Designated Safeguarding Leads in college who work to ensure the best outcomes for all of our students.

**Attendance**

Our attendance team work tirelessly to ensure all students are in college whenever possible. It is expected that if your child is to be absent for any reason, that you contact the attendance team as soon as possible. We have a designated attendance number that can be used for this: 01282 683014. If no-one is available to take your call, a voice message can be left.

**Attendance – What should parents/carers do to support college?**

* Your child should be attending college every day
* Your child should arrive on time: **8.40am** at the latest
* If your child is absent, you should ensure that you contact college as soon as possible
* If your child has a medical appointment (e.g. dentist / doctor) please ensure you try to arrange this out of college hours. If the appointment is in the morning, it is worth making sure your child comes into college first and then signs out for the appointment. This way your child will receive the morning registration mark.
* Your child should only be absent for valid reasons
* Holidays should **not** be taken in college time: they will be marked as unauthorised unless there are exceptional circumstances. We follow the Lancashire County Council policy on fines.
* All students are told that if their attendance is below 95% or they have 8 or more late marks they may not be invited on college reward trips

**What we will do:**

* Reward students with good attendance
* Monitor students if their attendance drops below 95%
* Meet with students whose attendance or punctuality is causing concern

If you have not contacted college to give a reason for your child’s absence, we will usually contact you by telephone before 10am.

* As part of our safeguarding policy, a member of the college’s attendance team will usually visit home on the first day of absence if we have had no contact from home and we are unable get in touch via telephone.

**Uniform**

Students should wear full college uniform every day. College blazers should be worn at all times but may be taken off in class if it gets too warm. College jumpers are optional so they do not need to be worn. In fact, the college is usually warm so there is no real need to buy a jumper; however, your child is welcome to wear a jumper if they wish to. It is important to note: a jumper does not replace the college blazer. Therefore, if your child chooses to wear a jumper it will be worn underneath their blazer.

At Unity College, we are in the ‘business of learning’ therefore, students must make sure they are ‘dressed for business’ at all times. Skirts should be of a modest length (not too short) and ties should be worn at an appropriate length. Students are to wear completely black footwear: they are allowed to wear all black trainers but they **must not** have a motif on that is not black. Please do not buy your child a pair of trainers with any coloured stripes or ticks on: if any labels on the trainers are not black, students will not be able to wear them. If students do arrive in college with inappropriate footwear, we will contact you to ask you to replace them. Hoodies are not allowed in the college building and outdoor coats cannot be worn inside the building at any time; outdoor coats need to be removed when students enter the building.

Please ensure you put the name of your child in all uniform including PE kit so that if items are misplaced, they are able to be returned to their rightful owner.

Details of the college PE Kit is on the college website as well as in the parent pack.

We want our students to look smart at all times and therefore we **do not** allow any jewellery except for a watch. Piercings of any type **are not** allowed at any time and staff will ask for jewellery to be removed if worn in college. If your child wishes to have piercings in the summer holidays, please do this at the start of the holiday so that they will be able to remove the piercing at the start of the college year. Please ensure that all jewellery is kept at home where it is safe. If students persistently wear jewellery, it will be confiscated and placed in the college safe for parents to collect.

We **do not** allow extreme hairstyles or hair that is not of a natural colour. Long hair will need to be tied back for some lessons e.g. Physical Education, Food Technology and Design Technology. The appropriate Unity uniform for girls and boys is detailed on the college website and in the parent pack that you have already received.

**Equipment**

All students should bring basic equipment into college each day. All students should have: a pen, pencil, ruler and a reading book with them at all times as a minimum. We are working to improve all student’s literacy skills and therefore we ask all students to carry a reading book with them at all times. On occasions they will be asked to read quietly and independently from their own reading book.

**Mobile Phones**

Students are permitted to bring mobile phones into college and are allowed to use them before college, during breaks, lunchtimes and after college. Students **are not** allowed to use mobile phones in lessons and the college policy clearly states that ‘mobile phones should not be seen, heard or used in lessons**.** Students should be made aware of this before starting at Unity College. If a student is seen with their phone out in lessons or between lessons, they will be asked to give their phone to the teacher who will put it in the college safe. If it is the first time they have been seen with their phone in a lesson or between lessons, then the phone will be returned to the student at the end of the college day. If it is the second time or more that their phone has had to be confiscated, then the phone will be locked in the college safe until a parent/carer can come into college to collect it. This obviously causes some issues for both the student and parent/carer but in order for phones to only be used at appropriate times we feel it is vital we follow this procedure. Parents/carers will be asked to collect the phone in person from the main reception. Please explain this to your child prior to them starting in September as we do not want students and parents upset about this.

Please also note that mobile phones and other electronic equipment are very expensive so please do not allow your child to bring expensive equipment into college if you are concerned about them losing it. If a phone or other equipment is lost at Unity College will not take responsibility for it. We would suggest that phones etc are insured by yourselves.

(At this moment in time we are aware that the government are debating whether mobile phones should be allowed in schools and colleges).

**Social Networking Sites**

One of the biggest issues in all schools and colleges is students upsetting other students via social media. Students in year 7 should **not** be on social media due to the age restrictions. If you allow your child to use social media, please keep a check on what they are doing and who they are communicating with. During the first few months at Unity they will meet lots of new people and will class them as friends even though they may not know them very well. Your child should not have hundreds of friends (these are acquaintances) so please keep an eye on who they converse with.

Social networking causes many issues in college. Please ensure you are checking what your child is posting and make sure they understand the dangers of being on-line. Our lessons in iD in college will cover this but as parents/carers you also need to be aware.

If there are issues in relation to social networks, we do advise parents to get police involved wherever necessary.

If you have an issue with Unity College, we ask that you do not post negative comments on social network sites about us. Instead we ask that you arrange an appointment in college so that we can discuss your concerns and resolve them.

**Guidance from Primary Schools**

Over the past few months we have been gathering information about your child from their primary school. We have contacted the year 6 teacher and asked about your child’s academic ability, the grade they would have received from SATS and where they are in terms of attitude to learning. We have also asked about friendship groups, who would they like to spend time with during social time at Unity and who it might be best to keep them apart from. This will all help to place them in the right groupings both academically and socially at Unity College.

**Academic testing**

We will be undertaking a comprehensive set of tests in September called CAT tests. These tests will help fill in the academic ability gaps left, due to no SATS testing this year. These tests include cognitive testing in Maths and English.

**Mixed ability groups**

At Unity, some subjects, including PE, Drama, Art and Technology, are not set on academic ability and are taught in mixed groups. Your child may be in with people they know from primary school or they may use this opportunity to make new friends.

Mathematics, Science, Languages, English and Humanities are all set by ability

**Friendship groups**

Your child will be placed in a Personal Development group (PD Group) with at least one other child from their friendship group

If you would like any further information on any of the above or if you have any concerns or queries please email: c.oakley@unity.lancs.sch.uk

SENDCO

Please email Miss Smith or Miss Duplain, our SENDCOs, with any information or questions about your child’s special needs provision. V.smith@unity.lancs.sch.uk or s.duplain@unity.lancs.sch.uk