Huntington School
Learn and succeed

# CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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| **Policy Number:** | **18** |
| **Member of Staff Responsible for the Policy:** | **Matt Smith** |
| **Date on which this Policy was last reviewed:** | **February 2025** |
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| **Dissemination of the Policy:** | **All Staff, Parents (via website), Governors** |

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## Purpose and Aims

Huntington School understands that the safety, wellbeing and protection of students is of paramount importance. With this in mind, all students must be able to expect certain levels of trust when sharing personal information with school staff.

Students need to know that they can seek help from the school in a safe and confidential manner.

This policy guides school staff, volunteers, parents and carers and visitors on the policy and procedures surrounding confidentiality.

Staff members adopt a supportive and accepting attitude towards students as part of their general responsibility for pastoral care. It is our hope that students and parents/carers feel free to discuss any concerns and worries they have, that may affect educational progress with members of the school team.

The Student Confidentiality Policy aims to:

- Promote a supportive and accepting ethos within the school.
- Safeguard the wellbeing of students.
- Build trust between students and staff.
- Empower students to exercise control over their situation and voice their concerns.
- Prevent the school dealing with each disclosure in isolation.
- Ensure that everyone in the school community knows that total confidentiality can never be guaranteed.
- Ensure that everyone in the school community knows the limits of confidentiality that can be offered within school so that they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate course of action. This may be linked to health, sex and relationship advice, safeguarding or any other personal issue that they wish to discuss.

## Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 2011
- The General Data Protection Regulation
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies and practices:

- Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- SRE Policy
- Drugs Education
- Medical Needs Policy
- Behaviour Policy

## Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, 'confidentiality' is an understanding that any information shared with someone in trust will only be passed on to a third party with the prior agreement of the person disclosing it.

For the purpose of this policy, 'disclosure' is the sharing of any private information, but which is not solely in relation to child protection issues.

Disclosure of the contents of a conversation may be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider is not identified except in pre-determined circumstances.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is a designated staff member responsible for ensuring the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is implemented by the entire school community, which ensures the wellbeing and protection of students.

At Huntington School, Mrs Gail Naish is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

## Policy application

This policy deals with personal information that may be divulged during the course of a school day. It is not meant to deal with certain extreme situations where there is an urgent need for the disclosure of information to relevant bodies.

In extreme situations, such as medical emergencies, staff members will pass on information as necessary for the wellbeing of the student.

All information about an individual student is private and will only be shared with staff members who have a legitimate need to know.

All data is processed and held in line with the school's Information Governance Policy.
The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for referring the student's confidential information to any multi-agency support services.

Staff members may not pass on confidential information unless they believe a child protection referral to the police or social services is necessary and the Designated Safeguarding Lead does not agree.

## Limits of confidentiality

In practice, there are few situations where absolute confidentiality can be offered. The school aims to strike a balance between confidentiality and trust, and ensuring the safety, wellbeing and protection of its students.
In almost all cases of disclosure, limited confidentiality is on offer.
The professional judgement of a teacher, counsellor or health professional is vital when considering whether to inform a student that a disclosure may be made in confidence, and whether such confidence could remain having heard the information.

## Classroom confidentiality

It is made clear to students that the classroom is not a place to disclose confidential, personal information.

Students are made aware that a staff member is always available to talk to them in private when needed.

If a visitor to the classroom is contributing to the lesson, they will work within the same boundaries of confidentiality as the teacher.

## One-to-one disclosures

Staff members will make it clear to students that they may have to pass on some information if they believe the student is at risk and that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Staff members must also make it clear at the beginning of any conversation such as this that there are limits to the degree of confidentiality they can offer and total confidentiality can never be offered or guaranteed.

When concerns for a student come to the attention of staff, e.g. through observation of behaviour, injuries or disclosure (however insignificant these might appear), the member of staff always discusses the issue with the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

In accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, more serious concerns, such as those involving potential abuse, are immediately reported to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the student is accessed as early as possible. Such incidents should also be logged on Class Charts, as early as possible.

The student will be informed when and why confidence has to be broken, who will be told and what the possible next steps will be.

## Disclosures to health professionals

Health professionals, such as the school nurse, may give confidential advice and information to students, provided the information is in regards to the student's wellbeing, and they are competent to do so and follow the correct procedures.

The school nurse is skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people. On a need-to-know basis, the school nurse may share information with appropriate staff in to enable improved support for students.

The school will always endeavour to encourage the student to discuss any issues with their parents if they feel it is in the best interests of the student to do so.

## Breaking confidentiality

When confidentiality must be broken because a student may be at risk of harm, in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the school will ensure the following:

- Students are told when the information has been passed on
- Students are kept informed about what will be done with the information
- To alleviate their fears about everyone knowing, students are told exactly who their information has been passed on to
- It will always be stressed to the student that the school will always have the best interests of the student at the heart of any decision making.

The Headteacher is to be informed of any child protection concerns.

Staff members are contractually obliged to immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Headteacher.

Staff members are not obliged to inform the police on most matters relating to illegal activity, such as illegal drugs or assaults; instead, these are assessed on a case-by-case basis with the support of the senior leadership team.

Staff members are not permitted to pass on personal information about students indiscriminately.

## Guidance for teaching staff

The safety and protection of the student is the paramount consideration in all confidentiality decisions.

Staff members are not obliged to break confidentiality unless there is a child protection concern or they believe that a child is at risk of harm.

Staff members are encouraged to share their concerns about students in a professional and supportive way.

In extreme cases, staff in breach of this policy may face disciplinary action, if it is deemed that confidential information was passed on to a third party without reasonable cause.

The following principles are adhered to when supporting students:

- Personal matters are discussed in an appropriate time and place
- Students with concerns are spoken to in confidence as soon as possible
- Where there are child protection concerns, the student is always spoken to in confidence before the end of the school day
- Students are told, prior to disclosures, that a staff member cannot guarantee confidentiality if they think a student is being hurt by others, hurt themselves, or hurt someone else
- Students are not interrogated or asked leading questions
- Students are not placed in the position of having to repeat the disclosure to several people
- Students will be informed before any information is shared
- The school will keep a written record of any conversations on Class Charts.
- Where appropriate, students are told to confide in their parents/carers

Staff members may find themselves dealing with highly personal issues and potentially upsetting disclosures. With this mind, staff members are encouraged to seek help from the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they are unsure about how to respond to a situation.

The school has access to several external agencies that specialise in providing advice and support. Students will be made aware of specialist services that are available to them

## External visitors

All external visitors are made aware of the Confidentiality Policy and work within its limits when interacting with students.

Healthcare professionals work within their codes of confidentiality when delivering their services within the school.

## Informing parents/carers

The school works with parents/carers to create a partnership of trust. It endeavours to inform parents/carers of their child's progress and behaviour.

When a student discusses a personal matter with a staff member, they are encouraged to share the information with their parents/carers, unless there is an identifiable child protection risk associated.

Where a staff member believes a child protection risk is posed in regards to the family of the student, following a disclosure, the staff member will immediately contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

## Dissemination

All parents/carers are made aware of the school's Student Confidentiality Policy and are informed that a copy can be viewed at the school office and on the school website.

Parents/carers are made aware that the school cannot offer complete confidentiality if they deem a student is at risk from harm.

## Policy review

This policy is reviewed every year by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and members of the Governors subcommittee.

## Appendix 1- Staff Information Sharing Flowchart

