

**TREVIGLAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE****CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY****Rationale and statement on the importance of confidentiality**

At Treviglas Community College we believe that:

- The safety, wellbeing and protection of our students are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this college make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between college staff is an essential element in ensuring our students wellbeing and safety
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our college that trust is established to enable students, staff, and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the college and minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure students and staff are supported and safe
- Students, 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
- The college's attitude to confidentiality is open and easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the college
- Issues concerning personal information including sex and relationships and other personal matters can arise at any time
- Everyone in the college community needs to know that **no one** can offer absolute confidentiality
- Everyone in the college community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the college community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health, sex and relationship or other personal issue they want to discuss

**Staff, students, parents, governors and the wider community were involved in developing this confidentiality policy**

**Definition of Confidentiality**

The dictionary definition of confidential is "something which is spoken or given in confidence; private, entrusted with another's secret affairs"

When speaking confidentially to someone the confider has the belief that the confidant will not discuss the content of the conversation with another. The confider is asking for the content of the conversation to be kept secret. Anyone offering absolute confidentiality to someone else would be offering to keep the content of his or her conversation completely secret and discuss it with no one.

In practice there are few situations where absolute confidentiality is offered in Treviglas Community College. We have tried to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, wellbeing and protection of our students and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where students and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information child protection issues and good practice is followed.

This means that in most cases what is on offer 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.

**The general rule is that staff should make clear that there are limits to confidentiality, at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring students' safety and wellbeing. The students will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and will be encouraged to do this for themselves whenever this is possible.**

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances.

**1. In the classroom in the course of a lesson** given by a member of teaching staff or an outside visitor, including health professionals:

Careful thought needs to be given to the content of the lesson, setting the climate and establishing ground rules to ensure confidential disclosures are not made. It should be made clear to students that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential, personal information. (See setting ground rules and working agreements). When a health professional is contributing to a college health education programme in a classroom setting, s/he is working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

**2. One to one** disclosures to members of **college staff (including voluntary staff):**

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both students and parents/carers (see note below) and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the students or parent/carer and for the staff member within the college and from other agencies, where appropriate. All staff at this college encourage students to discuss difficult issues with their parents or carers, and vice versa. However, the needs of the students are paramount and college staff will not automatically share information about the students with his/her parents/carers unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

(Note: That is, that when concerns for a student come to the attention of staff, for example through observation of behaviour or injuries or disclosure, however insignificant this might appear to be, the member of staff should discuss this with a Designated Safeguarding Lead (Mr O'Neil, Mrs Pender, Mrs Robins, Mrs Dunleavy,) as soon as is practically possible. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the student is accessed as early as possible. Please see the College Child Protection Policy).

**3. Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in the college:**

Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to students provided they are competent to do so. School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with students and always have in mind the need to encourage students to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the students are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a student's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

**The legal position for college staff:**

College staff (including non-teaching and voluntary staff) should not promise confidentiality. Students do not have the right to expect that incidents will not be reported to his/her parents/carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this college's staff can or should give such a promise. The safety, wellbeing and protection of the student is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this college make about confidentiality.

College staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue, however, at Treviglas Community College we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about students with colleagues in a professional and supportive way, on a need to know basis, to ensure staff receive the guidance and support they need

and the students' safety and wellbeing is maintained. College staff should discuss such concerns with their Line Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### **Teachers, counsellors and health professionals:**

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he or she should indicate to a student 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 teacher, counsellor or health professional must consider the best interests of the student, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our students and possible child protection issues.

All teachers at this college receive training in child protection and are expected to follow the colleges' child protection policy and procedures.

### **Counsellors and Health Professionals:**

At Treviglas Community College the school nursing service operates a drop in service for students. These services are confidential between the health professional and the individual student. No information is shared with college staff except as defined in the college's child protection policy. This is essential to maintain the trust needed for these services to meet the needs of our students.

### **Visitors and non-teaching staff:**

At Treviglas Community College, we expect all non-teaching staff, including voluntary staff, except those identified in the paragraph above, to report any disclosures by students or parents/carers, of a concerning personal nature to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. This is to ensure the safety, protection and wellbeing of all our students and staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken, both to ensure the student gets the help and support they need and that the member of staff also gets the support and supervision they need.

### **Parents/carers:**

Treviglas Community College believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at college, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our students can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a student does discuss a difficult personal matter with staff at Treviglas, they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parent or carer themselves.

The safety, wellbeing and protection of our students is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this college make about confidentiality.

### **Complex cases:**

**Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, seek a consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.**

**This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the following policies:**

- PSHE
- Drugs
- Sex and Relationships
- Child Protection
- Bullying
- Behaviour
- Whistle-Blowing
- Children in Care

**If the Headteacher issues instructions that she should be kept informed, all staff must comply. There is always a good reason for this, which you may not know about.**

**The principles we follow at Treviglas Community College are that in all cases we:**

- Ensure the time and place are appropriate, when they are not we reassure the student that we understand they need to discuss something very important and that it warrants time, space and privacy.

See the student normally (and always in cases of neglect, or abuse) before the end of the college day. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the student is accessed as early as possible.

Tell the student we cannot guarantee confidentiality if we think they will:

- hurt themselves
- hurt someone else
- or they tell us that someone is hurting them or others

Do not interrogate the student or ask leading questions. We will not put students in the position of having to repeat distressing matters to several people. Inform the student first before any confidential information is shared, with the reasons for this. Encourage the student, whenever possible, to confide in his/her own parents/carers

### **Support for staff**

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our students. At Treviglas Community College we prefer you to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because you do not have all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about students home with you. There are many agencies we can refer students to who need additional support and we have procedures to ensure this happens. We all work together as part of a team to support our students and asking for help is a way we ensure Treviglas Community College is a happy and safe learning environment. Treviglas teaching staff should discuss any concerns about students with Line Managers, Heads of House, Pastoral Support and SLT. Any unresolved issues should be discussed with **SLT and/or a Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

### **Onward referral:**

Mrs Nicky Pender, Mr O'Neill, Mrs Dunleavy are the Designated Safeguarding Leads and are responsible for referring students to outside agencies. Mrs Shirley Robins is the Designated Safeguarding Governor.

### **Review:**

This policy is reviewed every two years or whenever deemed necessary by the Headteacher and Governors in the light of events and changes in the law.