



26th April 2024

Dear Parents/ Carers,

I am not going to pretend that this week has been an easy week for anyone at the academy. As parents know this week has presented some significant issues which we have communicated to you about.

Safeguarding Update (All Parents/ Carers)

I do not intend to reiterate the message sent to parents by email on Wednesday this week. I would like to thank parents, students and staff in school for the responsible way they have handled this information. Parents will understand that there is nothing further I can add about the situation as there is an ongoing police investigation which we cannot interfere with. Following the questions from parents/ carers, I thought it was useful to clarify the answer to some common questions.

- **What does non-teaching mean at Unity?**

Non teaching means a member of staff who is not a teacher or who does not work in a classroom supporting students. For example, we would describe a teaching assistant as a member of the teaching team as they work with students in an educational capacity.

- **What checks are carried out by FCAT/ Unity Academy before a member of staff is employed?**

These checks are covered in Keeping Children Safe in Education. This is national guidance and applies to all education settings. These checks are detailed and a member of staff cannot start working in a school until they are all clear.

These checks include an Enhanced DBS check for anyone that works or volunteers in a school. The difference between an enhanced DBS check and a basic DBS check is that an enhanced DBS check also provides any relevant information held by police forces or authorities. In practice, this means that if the police have relevant information this can be shared even if there is no conviction to show.

In addition, at least two references are required from previous employers. These references ask the person providing the reference to confirm that they believe the candidate is suitable to work with children and that there have been no concerns during employment with them. This is further probed in interviews with mandatory questions related to understanding of safeguarding and previous convictions/investigations. It is also mandatory in interviews to ask questions relating to employment history.

Additionally, for all staff at Unity, a barred list check is undertaken to ensure that someone is not on the list of people barred from teaching in schools. These checks are done alongside identification and qualification checks.



- **Who checks that these pre-employment checks are carried out?**

The academy trust arranges for pre-employment checks to be audited on a regular basis to check they are all completed. In addition the checks have to be listed on a single central record which is checked at every Ofsted inspection and regularly by the safeguarding governor. FCAT also arranges for a safeguarding audit to take place which does additional checks on these. This is carried out by a former Ofsted inspector. The local authority also carries out audits of this and FCAT undertakes an additional external audit of safeguarding every few years.

The single central record and safeguarding processes for Unity were checked by Ofsted in July 2022 and November 2023 during inspections. Three safeguarding reviews have also taken place since July 2022. In the last twelve months a local authority audit has taken place and Unity was selected (at random from the ten FCAT academies) to be included in a detailed safeguarding audit as part of an external audit commissioned by FCAT. **None of these audits have identified any issues with any of the pre-employment checks.**

- **How often do you have to re-do DBS checks?**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (National requirements) do not require DBS checks to be re-done once employment has commenced. However, as good practice Unity Academy ensures that DBS checks are refreshed every 3-5 years for staff.

- **What if an employee is arrested after a DBS check and once someone is employed?**

Local agencies work together through a process called Working together to safeguard children. If this occurs, the Local Authority Designated Officer would receive notification and they would inform the school immediately.

- **Why can't the staff say anything else? Is there anything else you can tell us?**

There is an ongoing police process which we cannot undermine. In this situation, due to the social media footage, parents have as much information as the academy has at this time.

As previously communicated, we can confirm that the extensive checks described above were carried out for the employee in question within the last 2 years and returned nothing that would prevent employment in a school.

- **I feel anxious and concerned about my child's safety as a result of the communication from school?**

We understand this and are doing everything we can to reassure parents at this time. As a parent myself, whose child has attended Unity Academy for a period of time, I can only say that the FCAT HR team and I are confident that we followed all required pre-employment checks which did not identify any concerns and have taken action as swiftly as we can to communicate to you.



UNITY ACADEMY BLACKPOOL
Warbreck Hill Road, Blackpool,
Lancashire. FY2 0TS
Tel: 01253 355493

Email: admin@unity.fcat.org.uk
www.unity.blackpool.org.uk
Headteacher: Mr S Cooke BSc, NPQH

57th Blackpool Scouts (All Parents/ Carers)

More volunteers are urgently required to support the Unity Academy Scout Group which operates on a Thursday evening after school. Click [here](#). If you do want to discuss this further, please contact the academy and ask to speak to Mr Cooper.

Ready, Respectful, Safe: - Our Behaviour Curriculum

Our **behaviour curriculum** continued this week as we focused on **Active Listening**. We discussed how strong, respectful relationships can be developed if you can take turns in conversations, can keep focused and not be distracted by others around you when talking to someone whilst maintaining eye contact if you feel comfortable to do so. Primary children also thought about the importance of listening and the problems that can arise if we don't listen properly. Next week, we will be looking at **Respectful Language** in Secondary and **Positive Challenge** in primary. The primary children will use the book 'My Strong Mind' by Neils Van Hove and will focus on developing mental toughness which is a combination of resilience, curiosity and drive to grow yourself and confidence in your own abilities and interactions with people.

Primary Newsletter (Primary Parents/ Carers)

Click [here](#) to access the Primary Newsletter.

Reporting Bullying/ Pastoral Concerns (All Parents/ Carers)

If you or your child needs to raise any bullying or pastoral concerns with the academy please [click here](#).

Online Safety Support for Parents/ Carers (All Parents/ Carers)

Click [here](#) to access the link to this week's online safety guide for parents.

You can also sign up for The National College for free and view a wide range of resources and videos to support your family with online safety. To do this follow the link below:

Sign up tutorial video - <https://help.nationalcollege.com/parent-walkthrough>

Sign up for The National College - <https://nationalcollege.com/enrol/unity-academy-blackpool>

Yours sincerely,

Mr. S. Cooke, Headteacher



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