

No: 22

Adrian Over

FAO All Head teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads

Briefing Note to Warwickshire Schools from Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board

Local Case Review following safeguarding concerns at a local school

An independent review was commissioned by Warwickshire County Council at the request of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board's (WSCB) Serious Cases Sub-committee following the conviction of a member of staff at a Warwickshire school for sexual offences against students.

The offences occurred during a school residential visit abroad. The review explored:

- the circumstances that made it possible for the abuse and the grooming behaviour that preceded it to occur without detection or challenge;
- the culture of safeguarding within the school both at the time of the abuse and at the present time and;
- the extent to which appropriate steps have subsequently been taken to ensure that pupils are safe when attending school and participating in offsite activities arranged by the school.

The review identified a clear commitment to safeguarding at the school. Pupils told the reviewers that they generally felt safe and able to disclose abuse. Staff members were asked about the safeguarding culture of the school and the overwhelming response was that there was a firm commitment to the safety and welfare of children right across the school. The students who were interviewed described a school where staff listened to their concerns and where bullying was rare. Staff regularly report concerns about children and the system for recording and following these up is robust. Pre-employment checks are undertaken and recorded appropriately.

However, the review did identify three areas for improvements which the review and the board have identified potentially apply to all schools.

Pupils' identification of concerning behaviour from adults in a position of trust

Some pupils were aware of inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff towards peers and had not reported this. In light of this, WSCB will be considering how it can raise awareness among children and young people in Warwickshire around what is and isn't acceptable practice and behaviour by those in positions of authority.

WSCB may consider developing a young persons' charter in relation to expected standards of adult behaviour both in statutory and third sector services.

Adults' reporting of concerns about the behaviour of colleagues/ volunteers

A related issue in respect of reporting concerns about the behaviour of adults that work with children was some evident confusion about the difference between allegations and whistleblowing and whether concerns about adults should be reported using 'Green Forms' to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or direct to the Headteacher.

The need to reinforce the correct procedure was highlighted by the review.

All concerns about the behaviour of adults that work with children in schools must be reported to the Headteacher. 'Green forms' are not designed to record information about concerns about adult behaviour in school and should not be used to report allegations.

As you know, the Education Safeguarding Service has already sought to address this issue in part by providing an alternative recording and reporting form (prospectively 'Yellow Forms') for concerns about adult behaviour.

Issues in relation to external visits including residential visits

All schools are now asked to consider reviewing their procedures for external visits with particular reference to:

- issues around transparent selection of staff and volunteers accompanying external visits;
- the seniority, skills and experience of accompanying staff and volunteers;
- safeguarding training of staff and volunteers accompanying external visits;
- pre-visit briefings that include safeguarding arrangements and emphasise that safeguarding young people and using whistleblowing procedures to report inappropriate adult behaviour are as essential when young people are away from home as they are in the standard provision of services; and
- robust evaluation of practice and any concerns by Designated Safeguarding Leads after all visits and residential trips.

The review recommended that schools and organisations should consider all of the following as part of pre-visit briefings and risk assessments:

- rules around the taking of photographs
- use of student mobile phones (e.g. during the night)
- details of specific staff responsibilities on the trip (e.g. no "down time")
- distribution of emergency telephone numbers
- what to do in the event of concerns regarding students or staff
- a reminder of the staff Code of Conduct and appropriate boundary keeping/use of language etc.
- bedroom supervision protocols
- first aid arrangements
- relevant information about any vulnerable students

- medication arrangements
- risks specific to the trip
- travel arrangements etc.

Those issues potentially apply to all schools and other organisations (both statutory and third sector) which provide off-site activities, visits and residential trips for children and young people.

All Warwickshire schools are asked to consider these issues in order to promote good safeguarding practice.

Cornelia Heaney
WSCB Development Manager
Manager

Adrian Over
WCC Education Safeguarding

July 2017

Education Safeguarding Service:

Adrian Over
Education Safeguarding Manager
07966 224 286 or 01926 742525

Ann Seal
Taking Care Scheme Manager (Protective
Behaviours):
01926 742523 or 07745 655906

Linda Fenn
ESS Team Administrator/PA
01926 742525 or 07717 891064

Sophie Morley
ESS Training Administrator
01926 742601 or 07747 758712