

Assured Safeguarding - Schools & Settings

“Ensuring that leaders know that children are being kept safe”

For leaders in schools & early years settings 2011 edition - An 'Everybody's Learning' support resource developed in the East Midlands

Introduction

A few words about the purpose of this document. This edition of Assured Safeguarding is one of three documents to support key leaders within children's services:

- a. Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members
- b. Leaders in schools and early years settings
- c. GPs and health leaders

This edition is designed to help leaders of schools and early years settings reassure themselves they are doing everything possible to ensure that children within their jurisdiction are as safe as possible. It is not an attempt to describe what best practice looks like, nor is it a checklist for leaders to pass out to their staff to help assess current performance. It does not set out to replace more detailed checklists, which have been produced by many Local Authorities, but is intended to complement them.

What this document seeks to do is to help leaders be clear about what they personally can and should be doing to assure themselves that their school or setting - its staff, systems, processes, frameworks etc - are working as well as possible. It poses questions that will help leaders to reflect on how they know whether their performance management assures them that children are being kept safe.

The document includes examples of practice from headteachers, early years leaders and governors which they feel demonstrate how they personally ensure that children in their school or setting are kept as safe as possible.

We hope that leaders will use this as a self assessment when reflecting on their personal safeguarding practice.

Peter Duxbury - Director of Children's Services, East Midlands Region

The production of this resource has been overseen by a steering group, chaired by Peter Duxbury, the membership of which included representatives from the regions' second tier safeguarding leads group and the Strategic Health Authority. Development and field work was carried out by Christine Cassell and Marcie Taylor, through the SDSA - see back cover.

A range of publications and resources were analysed to determine key thematic areas that leaders should personally consider, namely:

- Leadership Accountability • Casework & Policy Reviews • Workforce Prevention • Integration/Partnership Working • Performance Assurance

The inspectorate description of outstanding practice

Schools and Settings

'In outstanding early years settings children learn how to keep themselves safe, have their concerns taken seriously, are kept safe by adults who operate clear child safety procedures and share them with parents, are suitable, well qualified and fully understand their role and assess and manage risks effectively.' Ofsted.

In a school which is outstanding in its safeguarding:

'The school is a leader of high quality practice, ensuring, for example that its procedures are constantly updated to reflect developing technologies. The school has excellent quality assurance and risk assessment systems, which are routinely informed by pupils' and parents' views, including those who may have barriers to communication. There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among the governors and staff at all levels, all of whom receive regular training on safeguarding, in particular child protection. As a result, a realistic and proportionate approach to safety and safeguarding permeates all aspects of the school's life. The school's collaborative working with other key agencies is exemplary.' Ofsted.

Leadership/Accountability - Questions to consider

Headteachers & Head of Settings

1. How do I know that all staff give priority to keeping children safe and feeling safe?
2. Am I confident that policy and procedures follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Local Authority guidance? When were they last updated?
3. What do I do to ensure we are working well with other agencies?
4. How do I make sure that relationships with parents and carers help us to keep children safe?
5. Do I have a clear, robust communication policy and procedures for staff, pupils, parents and carers?

Governing Bodies/Chairs of Governors

1. How do I know that the Headteacher and all staff are giving priority to keeping children safe?
2. Are we clear that policies and procedures follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Local Authority guidance?
3. How and when are they reviewed to monitor if they work in practice?
4. Who is our governor linked to Safeguarding? What training has this person received? What is the role and how does it link with the Headteacher, relevant staff and Chair of Governors?
5. Do we have a governor involved in multi-agency meetings and how do they work to keep children safe?

Leadership/Accountability - Examples of practice

Keeping safeguarding a priority

"I make sure that safeguarding is discussed regularly at staff meetings and we have regular update training sessions." Headteacher of a primary school.

"I have a termly meeting with the nominated safeguarding governor. We use the detailed safeguarding checklist provided by the Local Authority. This helps us to keep a safeguarding as high profile." Headteacher of a primary school.

Relationships and communications with parents

"Good relationships and communication with parents and carers is fundamental to everything we do in school. We make sure that parents know who they can talk to if they have any kind of concern." Headteacher of a primary school.

LSCB procedures and guidance

"We receive electronic updates from the LSCB of any changes to policy or local procedures. This prompts us to look at our policies and ensure that they are reviewed." Chair of Governors of a secondary school.

"The school safeguarding policy is based on the LA guidance and is reviewed annually by the Governing Body." Headteacher of a primary school.

"I know that policies follow LSCB guidance through attending the LSCB training sessions. The Headteacher and I attend training together wherever possible." Chair of Governors of a primary school.

Working with other agencies

"I make sure that I keep up with developments in the county on multi-agency working and know the arrangements for making a referral for additional support." Headteacher of a primary school.

Casework & Policy Reviews - Questions to consider

Headteachers & Head of Settings

1. Can I cite any example where I found a weakness in our safeguarding systems and put in place the means to correct it?
Could I talk about the strengths of our approach?
2. How do I give clear leadership in assessing and managing risk?
3. What do I do to be certain that individual cases are being dealt with appropriately?

Governing Bodies/Chairs of Governors

1. Whilst governors should not be involved in individual casework, do we have a process to assure ourselves that policies and procedures are being followed?
2. Does the governing body know what changes to policy and practice have been made as a result of case/practice reviews?
3. Who should be informed about case reviews on the governing body and how?

Casework Reviews - Examples of Practice

Managing risk

"As a Headteacher I think it is important to set a good example by carefully assessing risk, but keeping a sense of proportion so that we are not frightened to let children have a good range of experience." Headteacher of a primary school.

"All our staff have been issued with a small card outlining what they should do if they are concerned about a child." Headteacher of a primary school.

Casework

"We keep a log at the front of each case file noting the date and the action taken. It is helpful to see a chronology set out in this way, especially where a case is complex." Secondary Headteacher.

"I go to all the case conferences and core meetings for children at the school. This allows me to make appropriate decisions based on an assessment of risk." Primary Headteacher.

Learning from casework

"We had a complaint about bullying and racism. After the investigation I reviewed all our policies and procedures in the light of the findings." Chair of Governors of a secondary school.

Workforce - Questions to consider

Headteachers & Head of Settings

1. How do I ensure that all staff checks have been carried out?
2. Do I know that all staff have received the appropriate level of training?
3. How do I know that this training is helping to keep children safe?
4. Do I know and understand my staff's levels of confidence in keeping children safe? Do I know how my staff feel about safeguarding?
5. Have we followed the guidance and does the Single Central Record for staff meet requirements?

Governing Bodies/Chairs of Governors

1. How do we ensure that the nominated governor knows what is expected of them and can carry out the role effectively?
2. How do we ensure that governors have received appropriate and sufficient training? How regularly should governors' training be updated?
3. Do we have clearly and appropriately designated staff as 'responsible officers'? How do they report to the governing body?
4. Are the governors aware of the Single Central Record requirements and how do they monitor this?

Workforce - Examples of practice

Training

"As Chair of Governors I visit the school, talk to all staff about their safeguarding training, check the training record and speak to children about what makes them feel safe." Chair of Governors of a primary school.

"We check regularly whether everyone's training is up to date and arrange updates where necessary." Head of an early years setting.

"We have safeguarding training every year rather than follow the minimum requirement for every three years." Headteacher of primary school.

The impact of training

"I use staff meetings to check staff understanding of safeguarding. We look at example scenarios and staff are asked if they know what to do, who to contact and how to get advice." Headteacher of a primary school.

Staff checks

"A new volunteer was coming into school so I checked the central register to ensure that the CRB was in place." Headteacher of a primary school.

Prevention - Questions to consider

Headteachers & Head of Settings

1. What processes do I have in place for the early identification of vulnerable children and young people? Do I share with senior non-school leaders in the locality an understanding of what 'vulnerable groups' are?
2. How do I check that children and young people report concerns?
3. How do I check that staff report concerns?
4. Am I clear about all of the support available in my area?
5. Are we using the Common Assessment Framework effectively and appropriately?

Governing Bodies/Chairs of Governors

1. Do we give sufficient priority to early identification and prevention? How do we know that? Where is it discussed?
2. Do we know what other services and agencies are available to help us with the early identification and support of vulnerable children and young people?
3. What processes are in place to enable all students to express and report their concerns? Do we receive regular reports on this?

Prevention - Examples of practice

Awareness of local support

"It is important to know about all the support available in the area, including the non-statutory ones. Charities, for example, provide an invaluable safety net for many families." Secondary Headteacher.

Early identification

"We use the LA survey which includes questions on bullying. We also work with the nursing service which uses a questionnaire on emotional health and well being." Secondary Headteacher.

"Once a child or parent has asked for support it is often too late to prevent harm. Schools therefore, I believe, have a duty to ensure a secure and safe welcome to all, where no issue is taboo. We also need to hold fast to:

- The principle of a 'need to know' basis for sharing information
- The best whole staff understanding of the principals and practice of safeguarding
- Clear and consistently used routes for support and guidance as well as for referral and action." Secondary Headteacher.

Integration/Partnership Working - Questions to consider

Headteachers & Head of Settings

1. Do we have good working relationships and clear protocols with the local multi-agency team?
2. Do we have a good working relationship with social care services and know how to refer a child protection issue?
3. Do I know my local social care senior manager personally? Do I share their understanding of needs, thresholds, etc?
4. What do I do to help staff understand that safeguarding is our core business?

Governing Bodies/Chairs of Governors

1. What do I need to do to support good working relationships within the local multi-agency team?
2. How do we act on any feedback we have from the community, other agencies or parents on how safe children and young people feel?

Integration/Partnership Working - Examples of practice

Listening to parents and carers

"We put articles on safeguarding in the parent newsletter." Secondary Headteacher.

"We work in partnership with parents on all aspects of their child's well being and that includes safeguarding." Secondary Headteacher.

"When we asked parents and carers whether their children felt safe at school they told us that girls felt anxious in the toilets. We have increased our staff supervision and will ask girls and parents if this has made a difference." Chair of Governors of a secondary school.

Local multi-agency protocols

"The Assistant Director with responsibility for safeguarding has spoken to head teachers as a group to explain children's services and how children at risk are supported." Secondary Headteacher.

"I am aware that because our school is in a relatively affluent area it would be easy for staff and governors to become complacent. We need to be especially careful to stay up to date and vigilant." Headteacher of primary school.

Working with Partners

"We must also ensure that we work in professional trust with our multi agency teams, having a clear understanding that 'all agencies are equal and professionally responsible' in the sight of each other." Secondary Headteacher.

"Partners are, I believe, just that...partners. Teams of professionals who work in partnership with families and each other to support the best life chances for every child they know to be at risk of harm, as well as those who are harmed." Secondary Headteacher.

Performance Assurance - Questions to consider

Headteachers & Head of Settings

1. How do I know what works well and what we could do better?
2. How do I know that the designated teacher is carrying out his or her responsibilities?
3. How do I know if children feel safe?
4. What do I need to do to ensure that all staff know what they are accountable for?
5. Do I review regularly and rigorously our improvement plan for safeguarding?

Governing Bodies/Chairs of Governors

1. Are we doing enough to protect children and how do I know?
2. Does the governing body receive a regular report on safeguarding?
3. Do we know how we are likely to be graded in an inspection?
4. Do we know the features of an outstanding grading for safeguarding?

Performance Assurance - Examples of practice

Knowing how well we are doing

"Safeguarding is a standing item on the welfare committee of the Governing Body." Chair of Governors of a primary school.

"It is really important as a governor not to just tick the boxes but to really understand and check how well we are doing." Chair of Governors of a secondary school.

"I report to governors on our self evaluation of all performance, including safeguarding." Headteacher of a primary school.

Listening to children

"Governors meet with groups of children to discuss how safe they feel, whether they have been involved in bullying and how it is dealt with." Chair of Governors of a primary school.

"We ask our pupils regularly about how safe they feel and the things that help to make them feel safe. We do this through the school council but also have small focus groups." Headteacher of a primary school.

"In one of our meetings with a small group of children they told us that the time they felt least secure was lunchtime. The issue was the way that lunchtime staff were relating to individuals and groups of children. As a result we did some specific training for our lunchtime supervisors and will follow this up by asking the children if things are any better." Headteacher of a primary school.

There are three editions of Assured Safeguarding available to support key leaders within children's services:
Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members • Leaders in schools and early years settings • GPs and health leaders

Additional copies of this document can be downloaded from www.jriep.com or obtained from:

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