

# **175 safeguarding self-assessment tool: headline report to East Sussex Governor Forum**

## **Introduction**

The safeguarding audit tool kit was issued to all schools (maintained and independent), academies, free schools and colleges within East Sussex during September 2017. For ease of reading within this document, all these establishments will be covered by the term school. Similarly, where governing bodies are cited, this should also be understood to include trustee boards or management committees.

This report has been produced primarily for governors, but at the same time is being shared with schools. Governors are receiving this headline report at this time to fit the schedule of governor forum meetings, to provide the opportunity for discussion within these groups.

There will be a further report, with a different level of detail and questions, aimed at schools and shared through networks and the newsletter during terms 5 and 6. There will also be an additional report, again with a different level of detail, questioning, along with actions, which will be shared with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) towards the end of the academic year.

## **Audit purpose**

The purpose of the safeguarding audit toolkit is threefold:

First and foremost it provides schools with a robust framework against which they can complete a self-evaluation of practice within their individual setting. This process allows schools to identify areas of good practice and action plan against any areas requiring further development. The audit tool and action plan provides schools with the means to report comprehensively to their governing body, and the governing body can then provide critical challenge to the school, to ensure the accuracy and veracity of their self-assessment. Ongoing scrutiny, throughout the year, by the safeguarding governor can be supported by using the governor checklist which has been produced alongside the audit tool and mirrors statutory aspects of the toolkit.

Secondly, as well as providing reassurance to schools and governing bodies individually, around good practice and compliancy of safeguarding, the collation of all the audits across the county allows oversight by the LSCB about safeguarding within schools.

Thirdly, the audit data will inform the SLES/LSCB training offer as well as further support to schools provided through the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) network, the safeguarding newsletter and other offers of guidance and advice.

## **Format of the audit toolkit**

This current audit is the fourth occasion that East Sussex schools have been provided with an audit tool. In common with previous audits, it has been developed to cover all aspects of statutory guidance and local good practice. Previous versions have been formatted as a Word document, with schools required to give a red, amber, green (RAG) rating to a number of different standards. The current version is an Excel document and each standard must be given a yes or no response. This binary system creates greater clarity of each schools position, by not having the middle ground of an amber response. Any negative response should then feature within the action plan to develop this area to a positive position.

## **Quality assurance and shared learning**

It is important to recognise that the audit data is based upon schools self-assessment. To ascertain the consistency of school responses, SLES will be using some of the DSL network meetings as forums for peer challenge, where colleagues can critically challenge one another around their evidence base and planned actions within the audit. This will allow for shared learning of best practice.

## **Format of this report**

To reduce the raw data to a manageable amount and to focus on key points, a reporting threshold of 10% has been set: 10% equates approximately to twenty schools. In terms of this report then, the areas for further development which are highlighted in this document are those which at least 10% of schools responded to negatively.

## **Good practice**

The main body of this report will focus upon those areas which schools have identified as requiring further development, as it is obviously those areas where further support and guidance needs to be devised. However it is important to highlight too, those areas where schools report positively.

For the following standards, from the audit, 99-100% of schools reported positively:

- The school has identified an appropriate member of the leadership team as the (lead) designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
- The DSL takes an active role and holds overall responsibility for safeguarding, and safeguarding related continuing professional development of staff, in the school.
- The DSL is allowed sufficient time, autonomy and resources to attend Child Protection Conferences and multi-agency meetings.
- The governing body has a designated governor for safeguarding and child protection.
- The safeguarding and child protection policy is reflective of current local and national guidance or legislation.
- The safeguarding and child protection policy outlines staff responsibility to blow the whistle on the practice of others if it causes concern.
- There is a clear induction process, which includes safeguarding, for all staff.
- Children in the school know how to report concerns and can identify a trusted adult.
- Staff are able to recognise the indicators of children at risk of child sexual exploitation and the importance of raising concerns at an early stage.
- The school is compliant with the East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board (ESLSCB) Keeping Records of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns guidance (2017) in respect of record keeping.
- All staff are aware that patterns of absence and lateness can be an indicator of abuse; the DSL will share this fact with all staff in safeguarding and children protection training and refreshers and ensure there is professional curiosity at all levels.
- The school has undergone appropriate whole school safeguarding training that includes online safety and whistle-blowing procedures, and is kept regularly updated.
- All designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) have received DSL initial or refresher training within the two year requirement.
- At least one member of all recruitment panels have undergone safer recruitment training.
- All staff members undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction.

- The school makes any offer of appointment subject to satisfactory completion of necessary pre-employment checks.
- The single central record covers the information set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016).
- The headteacher immediately contacts the single point of advice (SPOA) if there is a clear disclosure of harm or consults with the local authority designated officer (LADO) when there is a general concern in the event of allegations about staff.
- The headteacher is aware of the need to ensure that Disclosure Barring Service/National College of Teachers and Lecturers referral requirements are adhered to in the event of dismissal/resignation when there is a clear concern about safeguarding/child protection.

### **Areas for further development**

The audit is separated into seven sections. For the purpose of this report, for the sake of focus and succinctness, no more than four areas for development have been included within each of these. For each section there is commentary, to provide further context, and then some questions for governing bodies.

### **Standard 1**

**The educational establishment has robust governance and lines of responsibility to ensure that practice meets required standards; leaders and managers are clear about their responsibilities and the steps they are taking to develop good practice beyond the statutory minimum.**

- 82%: The role of DSL is explicit in each role holder's job description.
- 85%: The duties of the DSL form part of each role holder's annual performance management.
- 90%: Monitoring visits relating to safeguarding take place three to six times a year, are recorded on a standard format and fully evidenced within the minutes of governing body meetings.
- 88%: The governing body minutes are able to evidence critical challenge of the school by governors, in respect to all safeguarding reports presented by the DSL.

### **Commentary**

The first two points: lack of job description and performance target, are largely accounted for by change of job role for individuals, and the paperwork/processes for these changes not having been effected yet. Where this is the case schools have made this a target on their action plan.

The second two points are not to suggest necessarily that the action is not taking place, but highlight how these actions are being recorded.

### **Questions**

- Is safeguarding a standing item on governor agendas?
- Do minutes accurately reflect the activity of the school and others?
- Does the recording evidence critical challenge, either through meetings or visit reports?

## **Standard 2**

**The educational establishment has policies and procedures in place that help to inform safeguarding practice. Policies are consistent with up to date statutory and local guidance. Policies are ratified by the Governing Body and placed on the provision's website in line with statutory guidance.**

- 60%: The DSL has undertaken a self-review of the school's current online safety practice.
- 76%: The school has an adequate risk assessment and associated online monitoring system in place, appropriate to the schools' needs and requirements, both for pupil and staff online activity.
- 76%: The DSL utilises online monitoring results to inform safeguarding decisions within the school.
- 84%: All staff have signed, and follow, an acceptable use agreement.

### **Commentary**

Some of the practical elements of online safety, in terms of software procurement and management, are often delegated to the IT department or coordinator, but the strategic and safeguarding aspect, in terms of monitoring results and intervening as necessary must always sit with the DSL. Monitoring should be such that early interventions or changes to practice can be made in a preventative capacity rather than as a reactionary measure. At the same time though, online safety, and awareness raising with children should be drip fed continuously throughout the year, and across the curriculum.

### **Questions**

- Does online safety feature within governor monitoring visits?
- Does the DSL report appropriately to the governing body around online safety, and is this critically challenged?
- Do the monitoring systems adequately monitor the activity of children and adults within the school?

## **Standard 3**

**The educational establishment promotes safe practices and a culture of safety, including tackling bullying, extremism, e-safety, and the importance of healthy relationships.**

- 79%: Procedures are in place regarding bomb threats, and lock-down.
- 88%: There is a clear induction process, which includes safeguarding for all volunteers, agency, contractors and third-party organisations.
- 77%: All volunteers, agency, contractors and third-party organisations know where to access welfare concern forms.
- 84%: The school is aware of the East Sussex Domestic violence and Abuse Protocol for Schools and is able to support pupils and families who are affected by domestic abuse.

### **Commentary**

All schools need to have procedures for crisis management, including bomb threats and lock-down. These need to be shared with all stakeholders and drilled, so that the school can be confident that the plans are effective.

Most schools are clear and robust with their induction for staff, but this same rigour must also be applied to all adults who are working on the school site.

## Questions

- Does your school have effective procedures for crisis management?
- Are the outcomes of drills shared with the governing body?

## **Standard 4**

**The educational establishment identifies concerns about possible abuse or about learners who may have gone missing and refers such concerns promptly to the relevant agencies.**

- 93%: A clear review cycle is in place for all child welfare files.
- 95%: Child welfare files show regular review and analysis.
- 95%: Individual child welfare files contain written plans which identify the help the child should receive and how concerns can be escalated.
- 92%: There is an attendance policy which is regularly reviewed, at least annually, and updated with current national and local guidance.

## Commentary

None of the standards within this section reached the 10% reporting threshold, so for this section the level was lowered to 5%, in order to capture these key points. The first three points all relate to record keeping, which raises an interesting question around the internal validity of the audit for these particular schools given that 100% of schools stated that: *The school is compliant with the East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board (ESLSCB) Keeping Records of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns guidance (2017) in respect of record keeping.* If all schools were compliant with this guidance then they should not have responded negatively to these first three points, as these are all aspects of this guidance. Within safeguarding practice reviews SLES will often need to provide additional guidance to schools around their record keeping, and will signpost towards the agreed guidance.

## Questions

- What systems exist within your school, to allow the governing body to monitor how children's files are being managed?
- Does the DSL routinely share anonymised information with the governing body, about welfare concerns or referrals to other agencies?

## **Standard 5**

**Senior members of the educational establishment and all other staff members who work with children undertake appropriate training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding children effectively.**

- 84%: There are robust mechanisms in place to ensure that contractors, agency and third-party organisations have received appropriate training in safeguarding and child protection.
- 68%: All governors must undergo specific online awareness training on the role of governors in safeguarding at least every two years.
- 57%: The Headteacher and Chair of Governors have attended training on managing allegations against staff.

## Commentary

Compliance and evidence of this, for contractors and third parties has been a particular focus for SLES this year. There are good practice letters, which schools can adapt, to gather the required information and reassurances, and these have been shared through DSL training, networks and newsletters. If this guidance has been followed then schools should have a robust mechanism in place.

It must be acknowledged that the managing allegations training has experienced a backlog this year, so people have had difficulty booking on to this, but more training dates are being added so places should become available soon.

## Questions

- Does training feature within governor scrutiny of safeguarding?
- Is adequate information shared with the governing body to allow for critical challenge around the appropriateness and timeliness of training?

## Standard 6

**The educational establishment operates safe recruitment procedures and makes sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on staff, volunteers and other adults who work with children.**

- 86%: The school has a stand-alone safer recruitment/recruitment and selection policy that clearly outlines the schools commitment to safeguarding.
- 90%: The single central record (SCR) covers the additional good practice in the ESCC SCR guidance where the school has purchased this traded service.
- 92%: The designated safeguarding governor regularly reviews the SCR and reports to the governors on compliance.

## Commentary

The nature, if not the frequency, of these findings agrees with observations from safeguarding practice reviews. It is not uncommon for schools to have a set of safer recruitment processes or protocols, which they erroneously refer to as a policy. The SCR is always found to be lacking some aspect of compliance, which contradicts the self-assessment by 100% of schools that: *The single central record covers the information set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016)*. This is not to cast doubt on the integrity of the response, but rather to highlight that one can only effectively check the SCR if the SCR is fully understood. This leads to the difficulty of effective checking by others as well, such as the safeguarding governor.

## Questions

- How knowledgeable about the statutory requirements for the SCR are those persons who are checking it?
- Does this knowledge allow for critical challenge of the compliance of the SCR?
- Is the SCR being effectively checked, or just looked at?

## **Standard 7**

**The educational establishment has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers that comply with guidance from the local authority agreed interagency procedures.**

- 90%: The school evidences lessons learned from any allegations against staff that have occurred.

### **Commentary**

The majority of these negative responses are due to schools stating this to be non-applicable as they have not had any allegations to deal with. This is a reasonable response, if this is the case and concurs with the broad findings of safeguarding practice reviews; however Schools remain the highest referring agency to the LADO, so this must continue to be an area of focus for all schools, even for those who have no incidents.

### **Question**

- What is the culture within the school, in terms of maintaining an attitude of ‘it could happen here’?

### **Next steps for governors**

- Has the safeguarding audit been adequately shared with the governing body?
- Did the governing body, not just the safeguarding governor, provide critical challenge?
- Does the governing body support the self-assessment of the school?
- Does the governing body support the actions and timeframes which the school has set for any areas requiring further development?
- Does the governing body have a clear schedule for the monitoring and further scrutiny of the action plan?

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### **Report to:**

East Sussex Governor Forum