

Review of Safeguarding Practice at Coldfall Primary School

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About the Authors

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Tony Lampert is an independent HR professional and Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development with a background of working in senior positions within the public sector. This includes a position of Head of HR for a Local Authority and a Senior HR role supporting schools and Children's Service. This involved co-ordinating major organisational change, managing employee relations' and leading on recruitment and selection, including safer recruitment practice and training.

Methodology

The review provided an opportunity for an independent 'snapshot' of safeguarding practice to enable assurance that Coldfall is a school where children are kept safe from harm through sound procedures and practice. The legal requirement for safeguarding in schools is set out in S175 Education Act 2002 and the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' Sept 2018 provides a framework for compliance in operating procedures. The information in this summary is based on the following sources. This includes a detailed audit of the Single Central Record together with findings which are contained in the attached report.

- Meeting with the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Assistant Head teachers (including the DSL/SENco and Assistant Head Teacher who leads on the wider curriculum), Deputy DSL, Safeguarding Lead Governor and ICT lead. Other members of the SLT attended the brief meeting at the conclusion of the review.
- Meeting with the School Business Manager and the PA to the Head Teacher
- Scrutiny of the Single Central Record

- Sight of Personnel files
- Information on the web site and scrutiny of policies and procedures
- Sight of training records
- Sight of Risk Assessments
- Perusal of recording systems and examples of both early help and a child protection concern

Section A: Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Practice

Safeguarding Leadership

There is a strong, stable and cohesive safeguarding team at Coldfall which is led by the DSL and Assistant Head Teacher who is also the SENCO and Designated Lead for Looked After Children (none currently on roll). Weekly meetings between the DSL and Deputy address both strategic and operational matters which enables ongoing monitoring of children where vulnerability has been identified. As a teaching school, the Leadership Team has developed a culture where safeguarding is given priority and staff are encouraged to pass on even low level concerns. This is good practice as it promotes the early identification of vulnerability. The weekly meetings ensure that behaviour and attendance are considered as they link to safeguarding. As a large 3 form entry school, it may be helpful to further build the capacity and expertise of the leadership team with an identified safeguarding deputy in the Early Years.

Safeguarding Practice

Regular training and updates help staff to maintain vigilance in relation to children's demeanour and take action in response to any concerns. The school currently has one child subject to a CP plan, 2 Children in Need (CIN) and 3 who have an Early Help Assessment. In addition there are a number of children where low level vulnerability has been identified and the weekly meeting provides a useful forum for tracking. As a school near borough boundaries, the DSL has had to work with 2 different local authorities, (Haringey and Barnet) with different systems in place and there have sometimes been challenges around the different application of thresholds for child protection and services available in relation to early help. It may be useful for the Leadership Team to access the Escalation Policy of both Local Authorities to support professional challenge. A recent example of successful challenge concerned a child with additional needs, including sensory difficulties, where the Local Authority initially rejected the application for services. The school supported the family in appealing the decision with the result that the Local Authority funded Occupational Therapy Services which has helped the child and family.

A good example of early help concerns a child displaying challenging behaviours towards peers. The DSL invited parents to a meeting and this enabled information sharing about the changed circumstances in the family. This helped understanding of the behaviour in the context of the child's feelings about mother's new partner and new baby. As a consequence the school was able to put in place both therapeutic support for the child and parenting support which led to a significant improvement. Parents were very appreciative of the school taking action early on rather than allow the situation to continue and possibly escalate.

The school makes effective use of pupil premium to support children in accessing opportunities such as after school clubs and arts and crafts and there are many examples of pastoral support to promote emotional wellbeing , including the use of feelings charts and a specially trained therapy dog to help develop confidence in reading.

A pro-forma concern form that includes a body map is used to document concerns and is attached as an appendix to the CP policy. Confidential records of any concerns are kept securely in the DSL's office separate from the child's educational record and transferred if a child moves school. The DSL keeps a detailed file record for any child where there are ongoing concerns or interventions. This shows good practice and enabled gaps in knowledge to be bridged in one example where information was needed by a secondary school.

Low level concerns are recorded onto a log that is kept electronically, for example, a child with insufficient food in their lunchbox, or where changes in behaviour noted. This enables any emerging patterns to be identified and helps to build a chronological picture over time.

The recording system appears to be secure and is well used and understood by staff.

Policies and Procedures

Coldfall has the expected range of policies and procedures that are clearly accessible on the website with an overarching safeguarding statement that articulates the school's commitment. The safeguarding and child protection policy is well written, comprehensive and compliant with the statutory requirements and current guidance including more recent developments in relation to peer on peer abuse and sexual and criminal exploitation. The policy includes a section on safer recruitment and allegations. Contact details are included for the Haringey MASH team and LADO. Some minor amendments are needed to reflect changing terminology (from CP Register to CP Plan 3.3) and the removal of the 'by association' criteria in the Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (10.1).

There are clear policies relating to anti-bullying, attendance and behaviour and complaints. The on line safety policy and related guidance is a particular strength, linking to a range of resources and information for parents and children to support the work of the school in developing 'digital resilience'. Staff are required to read relevant policies as part of induction, including the KCSIE Guidance and a staff code of conduct. You might consider expanding the code of conduct including cross reference with the Acceptable Use of ICT policy, perhaps just a bullet point to remind staff to read.

Training and CPD

The Safeguarding Leadership Team has attended relevant training externally and the DSL and Deputy DSL cascade training to the wider staff group. This is regularly refreshed with annual updates in accordance with requirements. This is supplemented by external training on particular issues such as Prevent. A number of staff have completed Restraint and Positive Handling training and also First Aid training. Members of the Governing Body have all attended safeguarding training. The Head Teacher, Assistant Head teacher(head of teaching school), Deputy Head and Chair of Governors have completed the Accredited Safer Recruitment Training. Staff training in mental wellbeing is planned in the near future.

The DSL maintains an electronic log to evidence staff training and demonstrate compliance.

As well as directly employed staff, it would be useful to clarify the arrangements and access to training for after school club staff (if not directly employed by the school) and peripatetic or self employed staff such as Music teachers. It would also be prudent to review induction arrangements for these groups.

There are examples of creative opportunities for continued staff development using bite size 'nuggets' in weekly staff meetings and this would be an effective way of keeping safeguarding on the agenda. The school should continue to prioritise training and consolidate with external input on particular issues where needed, for example, FGM and harmful cultural practice such as breast ironing.

Safeguarding in the Curriculum

Coldfall follows a whole school approach to values based education and has been awarded a Quality Mark from the International Values –based Education Trust for exceptional practice. The wellbeing of pupils is central to this framework and during PSHE children develop their understanding of values and critical thinking skills. The school participates in an empathy project which focuses on a different empathy habit each month that is embedded into the curriculum. This aligns with the British Values underpinning the Prevent agenda. Children are taught about keeping themselves safe through the Sex and Relationships education programme which includes topics such as personal space and safe touch. On line safety has a strong focus both internally and using external speakers, for example, the school hosted an assembly from 'Google'. Children themselves play an active role through a system of 'Digital Leaders' to promote peer support and develop resilience. On line safety is embedded throughout the curriculum and there are clear frameworks for acceptable use of ICT, including social media. The children have their own set of on line safety rules.

The Voice of the Child and Parent Partnership

The values ethos of Coldfall supports a culture where children's voices are heard and participation is actively promoted, for example, in the role of Digital Leaders and Buddies. Regular pupil surveys are carried out and children are encouraged to talk to a trusted adult if they have a concern. Annual parent surveys show that parents consider their children to be safe and there is a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Regular newsletters and a wide range of information on the school website helps to strengthen parent partnership and involvement in the values curriculum. The complaint policy is clear and accessible to parents. A positive behaviour strategy and a strong anti-bullying message help to make school a safe and supportive environment.

Governance

The Governing Body has designated a governor with responsibility for safeguarding and child protection who attended the review. She meets every half term with the DSL to ensure ongoing dialogue and monitoring of the child protection arrangements. The DSL regularly reports on safeguarding to the GB meetings and presents an annual report. Governors have all had training in child protection and Governors visiting days are a way of enabling direct observation of the day to day life of the school. The Governing Body is responsible for agreeing policies and

these are subject to regular review and update. The school also conducts regular audits using the Local Authority framework. As part of the process of continuous development, the GB may wish to consider different models and templates for reporting and sources of evidence. The Chair of the Governing Body regularly checks the SCR which is good practice in assuring compliance with safer recruitment practice.

Conclusion

Coldfall appears to have a strong foundation for safeguarding that is supported by clear leadership arrangements. Policies are comprehensive and kept up to date. Training and development has a high priority and the values approach helps develop a culture where children are listened to and play an active role in school life. Coldfall applies sound and safe practices around recruitment and selection and risk assessments to support the health and safety of pupils. Whilst there were no evident gaps, safeguarding challenges are ever changing and need to be kept under continual review. The Leadership Team and Governing Body might find it helpful to review emerging safeguarding risks and ensure safeguarding is explicitly integrated into the school development plan. It would also be useful to review how safeguarding is reported and scrutinised by Governors and to consider different sources of evidence. To summarise, the following actions might further strengthen and develop safeguarding systems

- Amendments to SCR as outlined in Part B of the report
- Clarify arrangements for induction and training for contracted and self employed or peripatetic staff
- Minor amendments to the Safeguarding and CP Policy , section 3.3 replace CP register with CP plan and section 10.1 delete 'by association' . Confirm policy has been ratified by GB. Include reference to ICT policy in your code of conduct.
- Consider how continuous staff development re safeguarding can be maintained, perhaps using nuggets and/or anonymised case examples. Are there any gaps in knowledge, for example, about some of the more recent emerging issues?
- Consider mapping safeguarding in the curriculum as it applies to different year groups. Are there emerging risks for children in your area? For example, criminal exploitation
- Review the system for reporting to the GB to promote effective challenge
- How will safeguarding be incorporated into your School Development Plan and aligned to the Empathy Project so that safeguarding is a 'golden thread' in the same way as your school values