

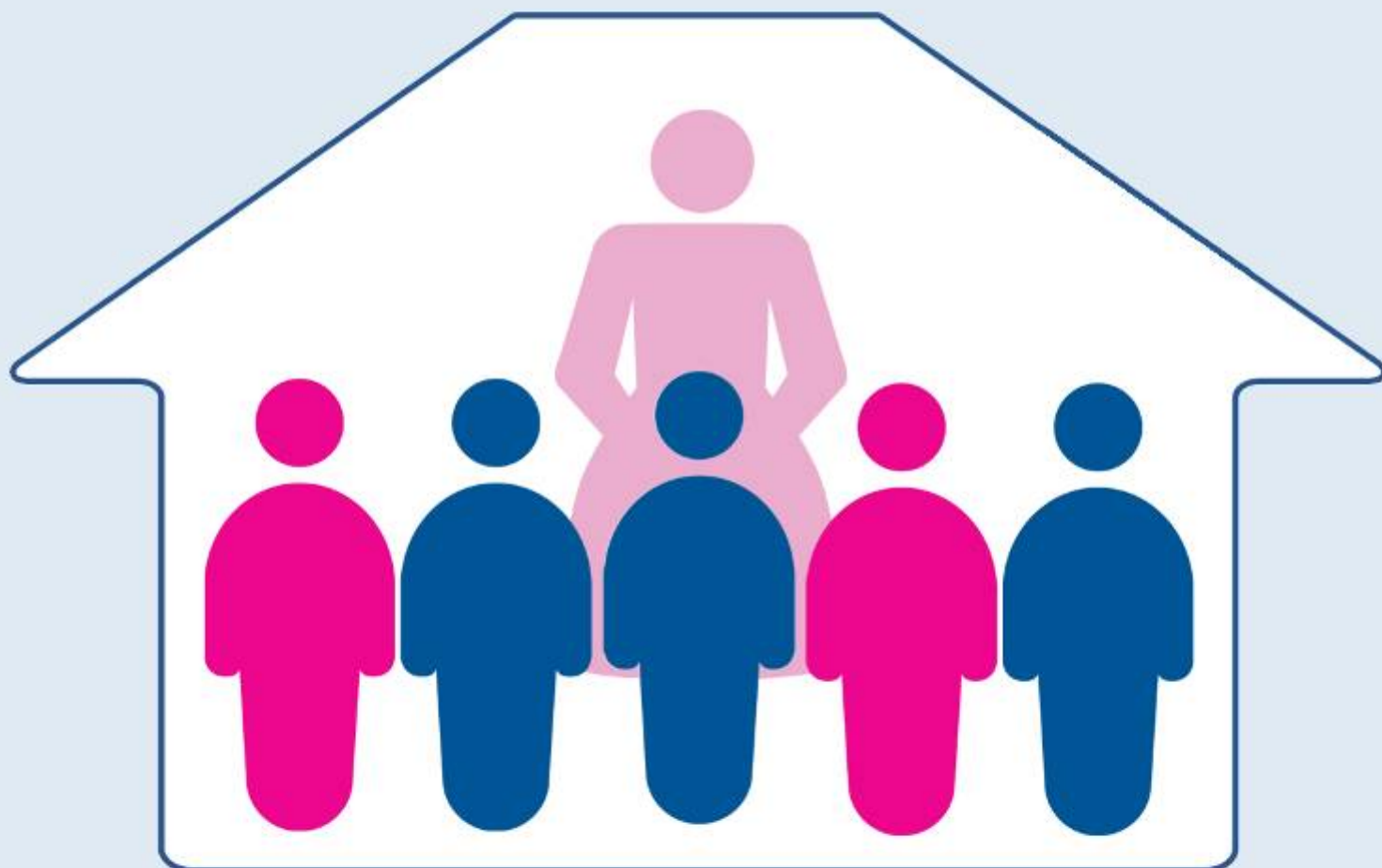
"You have someone to trust"

Outstanding safeguarding practice in primary schools

September 2012



Championing Children and Young People in England



NSPCC 
Cruelty to children must stop. **FULL STOP.**

 **Youthworks**
We care about children and young people

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About the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

As the Office of the Children's Commissioner, it is our statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately and in line with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

OUR VISION

Children and young people will be actively involved in shaping all decisions that affect their lives, are supported to achieve their full potential through the provision of appropriate services, and will live in homes and communities where their rights are respected and they are loved, safe and enjoy life.

OUR MISSION

We will use our powers and independence to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely asked for, listened to and that outcomes for children improve over time. We will do this in partnership with others, by bringing children and young people into the heart of the decision-making process to increase understanding of their best interests.

About Youthworks

Youthworks Consulting explores what matters to children and young people. By undertaking consultations and research projects to explore and evaluate users' experiences, we hope to improve services for young people and provide training for services. Youthworks runs the Cybersurvey programme with 9296 young respondents, examining all aspects of e-safety from the perspectives of children and young people.

About NSPCC and Safeguarding in Education Service (SiES)

The NSPCC's vision is to end cruelty to children. We aim to do this by creating and delivering the services that are most effective at protecting children, providing advice and support for adults and professionals worried about a child, working with organisations to ensure they effectively protect children and campaigning for changes to legislation, policy and practice in order to keep children safe.

NSPCC / ChildLine recognises the key importance of the education sector in child protection and safeguarding. It has a range of services that work in and with schools. The NSPCC's Child Protection Consultancy Division is developing its role to support those who work in the education sector and has established a discrete Safeguarding in Education Service. It provides advice, information, training, consultancy, and learning resources for professionals working in education. It seeks to identify, highlight and disseminate best practice in child protection and safeguarding, and the team comprises of members with a wealth of experience in the area of child protection and education.

The project group included:

Julie Mortimer, Michelle North and Caroline Tewkesbury of NSPCC Safeguarding in Education Service and Adrienne Katz of Youthworks Consulting.

Acknowledgements from NSPCC

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been so generous with their time in the completion of this report. We are particularly grateful to and wish to thank the following contributors:

- Staff, children and parents at the schools who were visited for being so generous and making us feel so welcome. It was a great experience to come and spend time with you and your pupils and I hope that we have been able to put into words some of the things that make your settings so special to everyone involved.
- Other people who have taken the time to answer our questions and complete the questionnaires that have helped us so much in shaping this report. Without your support we would not have been able to base our findings on such rich evidence.
- Those working for local authorities, local children's safeguarding boards and within the NSPCC who helped to identify schools with 'good practice'.
- The Midlands Association for Safeguarding in Education group who supported this work and extended their contacts to help us to widen our reach with the surveys.
- NSPCC administrative staff for their support throughout the project.

We would like to acknowledge the staff at the Office of the Children's Commissioner for their support and guidance through this process and for giving us the opportunity to undertake this piece of work.

Foreword from the Children's Commissioner

Schools are vital to the protection and support of all children and particularly to those who are most vulnerable. They are the universal service to which virtually all children have access. Primary schools play a particularly important part in a child's life, often being close to their homes, playing a significant part in their lives and communities. We often hear from children that they find school a safe place away from any problems they encounter in their home lives, that teachers can be among their most trusted adults, and that schools are sources of guidance, information and support as well as education. We commissioned this work from the NSPCC with Youthworks in order to identify models of good practice in primary schools which would provide the basis for practical guidelines and information to teachers, school leaders and other children's services professionals. Our interest was in looking both at in-school practice and at external liaison from the school's perspective, and presenting models for how best to involve schools effectively in inter-agency working. This is a report on some of the best practice found in a range of English primary schools, albeit based on a small sample of actual schools. Quite rightly, it focuses heavily on how the sampled schools' overall approach to safeguarding makes it far more likely that any child protection concerns can be recognised and robustly but sensitively addressed.

It was timely that we ask the NSPCC to look into how schools are addressing issues of safeguarding and child protection. This report comes at a time when many changes are taking place in local landscapes, and both local authorities and other support agencies remain under financial pressure. We considered it likely there could be potentially negative impacts on the way schools engage with vulnerable children. Indeed the study presented here finds evidence of higher thresholds being put in place, and resulting reduced access to support services, both of which worrying circumstances create increased challenges for conscientious schools whose key concern is to keep children safe, enabling them to learn and achieve.

We were struck by the extent to which this study's sample of schools were directly providing, and working with local services to provide, targeted and vital support to children and families who had a range of needs. It is admirable that there is such good and flexible practice in primary schools which are providing such support to children and families, and that so many play such a strong role in the identification of need for further help. However, it is of concern that reductions in networks of local services were directly impacting on both the very children and families in need of greater support, and schools' ability to locate services for them in a timely and easy fashion, so that they could improve their lives.

The other context in which we were interested was localities' interagency working: such work is vital to the protection of children. Many models featuring highly effective practice have been developed in recent years, especially using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Family (and the Child) approaches. Schools are managing increasingly complex work, seeing themselves as hubs for their communities' activities and services, as well as fulfilling their core purpose as places of excellent teaching, learning and achievement. It is essential that schools are linked closely with other agencies in their localities, including health services, voluntary organisations and early intervention services, in addition to children's social care. We wanted to understand current experiences of joined up working from the schools' perspective, and to share the learning available from models of good practice in operation in real settings that other heads and schools can recognise, and use.

Above all, we wanted to learn more about the experiences of children. We wanted to find out what helps them to feel safe, and how they engage in supporting each other in school. Our remit is to hear from children in all kinds of settings and situations, to make their views known and to promote and protect both their interests, and their rights. Children are astute, frank and open tellers of their own stories, as we find in all the work we do with them. Important messages were given to the research team by the children with whom they spoke for this investigation. Over and above the systems put in place for them, including monitoring and help for individuals and their families, what comes across loud and clear is that children felt safe in the schools sampled, where good practice was the norm. The report's title quote comes from one of these children.

I welcome this report and the accompanying 'Practical Tips for Schools.' I would like to thank the authors, the schools, and the children who made it possible. It is always good to celebrate and share illustrations of excellent practice and we trust that other schools will benefit from reading about the work of their colleagues. I am equally indebted to the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Principal Policy Advisor (Safeguarding) Jenny Clifton, and to John Connolly, Principal Policy Advisor (Education) whose leadership of this theme for the OCC led us to commission this study, and has resulted in this report.



Dr Maggie Atkinson
Children's Commissioner for England

Recommendations from the Children's Commissioner:

1. That the Department for Education assist us with the promotion of the 'Practical Tips for Schools' which are based on this study and make widely available the messages from this study.
2. That changes to Statutory Guidance on child protection do not weaken but rather promote the role of schools and their collaborative arrangements with partner agencies in safeguarding, in recognition of their importance to the early recognition of and support to children in need and at risk.
3. That schools contribute to their local safeguarding network through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and other means and take on board the suggestions from this report as to how they can address and improve their safeguarding practice.

1. Executive Summary

This study focuses on best professional practice in safeguarding and responding to child protection concerns in a selected number of primary schools. Good child protection practice in school settings is dependent on a sound overall approach to safeguarding children. The objective of this study has been to identify models of good practice as the basis for guidelines – in the form of ‘practical tips’ - and information to teachers, school leaders and other children’s professionals.

The research looked at both in-school practice and interagency liaison from the school’s perspective, and how this enabled them to make their schools safe.

Examples of good practice were identified via Ofsted’s ‘outstanding’ ratings (on safeguarding criteria and overall), through Local Authority and ChildLine Schools Service recommendations and using demographic data. Visits were made to selected schools, where staff at all levels were interviewed and structured focus groups with children were run. The sample of schools which were visited were specifically selected to ensure a variation in size, geographical location and demographic intake so that the case studies and findings could be replicated in a wide variety of settings. Other staff, educational professionals, external agencies and Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) members responded to online surveys.

Key Findings

- The dynamic leadership style of the head teacher and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) led the whole school community in a committed and responsive approach to act in unity on safeguarding.
- Reflective practice and adaptability allowed schools to be responsive and flexible. Cases were often used to shape policy and thoughtful leaders adapted to changes in their environment.
- There was good access to the senior leadership team: although the head teacher often had lead responsibility (as designated senior person with responsibility for child protection) the senior leadership team members supported this role and were available to support others.
- There was shared responsibility for safeguarding - every person was aware of their role and responsibility for safeguarding.
- Staff were seen as approachable by children and parents/carers.
- There was a range of support strategies to meet the individual needs and circumstances of children identified as being vulnerable.
- Priority was given to developing relationships with external agencies - this was illustrated by the allocation of resources, such as special educational needs co-ordinator time, family support workers or learning mentors. Systems for passing on concerns about risk would thereby be robust.
- Thresholds for raising concerns were minimal.
- Schools proactively used all concerns to target early intervention work.
- All concerns were recorded and a consistent system used: for example concern logs or ‘niggle notes’. This enabled an overall picture of each case to be assembled.
- Effective monitoring of the records informed the training programmes for staff. The leadership team ensured relevant training was accessed to address the identified needs of both their children and staff. This was in addition to the rolling programme of child protection and safeguarding training. Staff were also provided with regular updates and given the opportunity to participate in policy reviews in light of the training they had received.
- Staff felt well supported in their safeguarding role and in turn felt able to provide a high degree of support to children.

- Empowering messages of support for both staff and children were displayed around the school.
- Transition strategies were in place for vulnerable children entering and transferring from the school.
- Core themes emerged, based on observation of all the outstanding schools. The themes identified fall into two categories and represent interdependent aspects of safeguarding:

Values underpinning the school culture

Communication and Relationships
 Culture and Ethos
 Pupil Empowerment

Practical implementation of the whole school strategy

Policy and procedures
 Training
 Leadership Management
 Reflective Practice

Conclusions of the study

- Schools would value guidelines and case studies on identifying and developing a range of support strategies for children, particularly those recognised as 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' of abuse and neglect.
- In relation to the above, advice and training should be provided on the development of nurture groups to address different social and emotional needs.
- Schools valued support strategies, such as peer support systems, that gave pupils roles in supporting their peers. Guidelines and case studies would be valuable in assisting to identify and advise on safe and effective strategies for engaging pupils. The availability of information on child protection and programmes on staying safe for pupils continues to be important. Schools reported the loss of services to train and support peer supporters and, hence, advice should be included on the development of peer support networks with signposts to national and local organisations offering these services.
- For there to be effective early intervention, resources need to be dedicated to enable school staff to liaise with other agencies (such as social care, CAMHS, Family Intervention Projects (FIP) and to attend child protection/ safeguarding or other appropriate meetings. This could be achieved through providing time off timetable for staff members such as the SENCO or Learning Mentor. Wherever possible, schools should identify a dedicated space to host multi-agency meetings that can be held without interruption.
- In relation to the above, schools should continue to support relationships established through the former 'Safer Schools Partnerships'.
- Further research could helpfully be undertaken to identify the successful systems used to log and monitor concerns and the reasons for the inconsistent use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to achieve this.
- Advice and guidance should be provided to develop rigorous information sharing systems, with attention to the additional needs at times of transition.
- Advice and training is needed for senior managers on how to support the designated person(s), key staff and all staff in their safeguarding duties.
- School leadership needs to ensure training and dedicated time for staff to meet their responsibilities, to be able to reflect upon their safeguarding policies and practices and to continue learning about issues of abuse and neglect.
- School leaders should engage with their local schools/ education representatives on the

LSCB on the development of local policy and procedures following the publication of the new Working Together guidance in 2012. This should include greater consistency in the use of common assessment approaches to multi-agency working with families in need and thresholds for interventions.

2. Objectives of this study

This research was commissioned by the Officer of the Children's Commissioner to be undertaken by the NSPCC and Youthworks in order to identify best professional practice in response to child protection and safeguarding concerns in primary schools. This included both in-school practice and interagency working from the school's perspective. The project fits within the OCC remit to address the protection rights of children and young people under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC (Article 19 and 34). Practical tips and case studies have been developed on the basis of this project for the use of teachers, school leaders, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs), and other children's professionals.

The project follows previous research showing that there are barriers to the development of good safeguarding practice in schools; including rapidly changing services, legislation and a lack of professional confidence. This report presents a summary of current practice to help teachers and other children's professionals gain a sense of what is being done in selected schools to create a safer environment; one that is underpinned by 'outstanding' safeguarding practice.

The project focused on how schools use their unique position in the lives of children to:

- spot potential risks and early signs and indicators of abuse.
- manage risks which are identified.
- promote safety messages to children.
- advise and inform children.
- target early interventions.
- implement a 'whole school' approach to children's wellbeing.

The project team contacted a selection of primary schools identified as demonstrating 'outstanding' practice by Ofsted and invited them to participate in the gathering of evidence, either through surveys or face to face interviews. This selection process was supported by NSPCC and local authority colleagues who also nominated outstanding schools to take part. The selection process also ensured that evidence was gathered from a variety of schools with the intention that the findings were replicable in the majority of primary settings. The team collected information from identified members of school staff, including the designated person, other members of staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors and external partners. Further evidence was gathered from local authority colleagues, LSCB members and other education professionals, as well as a wider selection of schools.

This data has been analysed to see what is working well and how this knowledge can be shared and replicated to support other education settings to achieve the 'outstanding' standard in their safeguarding procedures and practices, thus empowering schools to create safer cultures for their children.

3. Current Legislative and Policy Context

In recent years safeguarding within schools has evolved rapidly. There have been significant developments in the policy, legislation and guidance related to safeguarding children's welfare and promoting their wellbeing. Serious case reviews following tragic incidents have led to national outcries and consequent changes in multi-agency working and safer recruitment practices.

The undoubted importance of safeguarding and wellbeing of children as the backbone to education was acknowledged in its use as a limiting judgement by Ofsted from September 2009. However, the new framework (January 2012) has changed this and it is now subsumed within two of the four key judgments ('Quality of leadership in and management of the school'; and 'Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school'). The pace of change has been such that schools and services have reported finding it hard to keep up and it has, in some cases, led to uncertainty within the workforce around, for example, vetting and barring procedures and other statutory duties.

Schools are in a unique position to identify and support those children who are at risk of being harmed and to work with other agencies to take action.

The Children Act 1989 is the main legal framework for safeguarding children and for child protection in England. The Government is also committed to the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, a variety of pieces of legislation and guidance govern the safeguarding responsibilities of schools:

Legislation	Guidance
Children Act 1989	<i>Supporting Looked After Learners 2006</i>
Education Act 2002	<i>Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education 2006</i>
Sexual Offences Act 2003	
Children Act 2004	<i>Safe to Learn 2008: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools</i>
Education and Inspections Act 2006	
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006	<i>Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 (under revision)</i>
Children and Young Persons Act 2008	<i>Ofsted Section 5 guidance for Inspectors and the evaluation schedule (Jan 2012)</i>
Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Act 2009	<i>What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2006)</i>
Children, Schools and Families Act 2010	<i>The Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils (2012)</i>
Education Act 2011	

This is a sample of the documents available and the extent of the legislation and advice can, at times, seem overwhelming.

Governing bodies of schools and local authorities must comply with the Education Act 2002 (section 175 for maintained schools; section 157 for independent schools) in their duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of its pupils and pay due regard to any subsequent guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Further guidance, *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education*, makes it clear that schools fulfil safeguarding duties by:

- providing a safe environment.
- identifying and protecting any child at risk of significant harm.
- preventing unsuitable people from working with children and young people.
- promoting safe practice/ challenging unsafe practice.
- ensuring that staff receive the necessary training for their roles (within specified timescales).
- working in partnership with other agencies to provide services for children and young people.

The assessment of safeguarding practice in schools

More than three quarters of all schools were found to have good or outstanding safeguarding procedures in the most recent Ofsted annual report. Consequently, the practice of assessing safeguarding as a separate 'limiting judgement' in inspections has now come to an end. In this report Ofsted stated:

"It is now rare for inadequate procedures to be identified. This indicates that schools have considerably improved in this area of their work and take their responsibilities in this area very seriously."

*The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and Skills 2010/11, Ofsted*

A year earlier Ofsted had found that 15% of primary schools were rated as 'outstanding'. For the short period that this inspection regime was in place it seems that improvements were noticeable but there may be less focus on safeguarding now it is part of the four key judgements in the new inspection framework. Initial figures for 2010/2011 suggest this figure fell to 11%. (Ofsted website). Further evidence can be found in the literature review (Appendix 3).

Despite the climate of uncertainty surrounding legislation and guidance, schools can provide an oasis of stability for vulnerable children, enabling them to feel safe. Schools can proactively support them to address their needs. It is how they achieve this that is the focus of this report.

4. What is 'outstanding' safeguarding practice in school?

A brief literature review

A shared understanding of outstanding practice

It is crucial that there is a shared understanding of what is meant by 'outstanding safeguarding practice' if primary schools are to be effective in their safeguarding duties. In the context of this study, it is also important to understand how these examples of safeguarding practice complement the early intervention work provided in primary schools.

The Ofsted definition for safeguarding is based upon the Children Act 2004 and the guidance document *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010). It is summarised as:

- protecting children and learners from maltreatment.
- preventing the impairment of children's and learners' health or development.
- ensuring that children and learners are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- undertaking that role so as to enable those children and learners to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Using these parameters as their basis for inspection, Ofsted focus on how the settings and the services they provide keep children safe, whilst also assessing how they help to ensure that the children feel safe. To support schools in this work, Ofsted identified key features of outstanding safeguarding practice in schools in *Safeguarding in schools: best practice, September 2011*.

These can be summarised as:

- *Quality Leadership* - management of the workforce that makes safeguarding a priority which is firmly embedded across all aspects of school life.
- *Robust vetting procedures* - these are in place for staff and other adults within the school.
- *Rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures* - these are clear and accessible, comply with statutory requirements and are updated regularly. In particular the child protection policy is easy to follow and known by all.
- *Accessible child protection arrangements* - pupils, families and adults within the school know who they can talk to if they are concerned.
- *Excellent communication* - systems are set up which are easy to follow and provide up to date information to those who need it.
- *Priority given to safeguarding training* - going beyond basic requirements to extend professional expertise.
- *Robust site security* - this is understood and adhered to by all staff and pupils.
- *Flexible and relevant curriculum* - this is used to promote safeguarding and teaches pupils to stay safe, protect themselves and take responsibility for their own and other's safety.
- *Courteous pupil behaviour* - an understanding that they have a shared responsibility to enable everyone to keep safe.
- *Health and safety arrangements* - these are well thought out, workable and protect and promote pupil's health and safety.
- *Rigorous monitoring of absence* - there is timely and appropriate follow-up to encourage regular attendance.
- *Risk assessments* - these are taken seriously and used to promote safety.

Safeguarding in schools: best practice, September 2011, Ofsted

Three principles are emphasised in reviews and research:

- Protection from harm.
- Collective responsibility for children's welfare.
- Early intervention to prevent cases escalating.

Ofsted stresses that incorporating these elements into safeguarding practice enables schools to identify and address needs at an earlier stage, with the benefit (in some cases) of preventing the escalation of issues to crisis point. To this aim, safeguarding children's welfare starts as soon as additional needs have been identified, not just when there are concerns about possible harm. Added to this is the need for collective responsibility for the welfare of children:

“Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. However, all agencies and individuals should aim to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010, DCSF

Intervening early

The assumption that early intervention approaches improve outcomes for children, young people and families has been supported by recent compelling reviews. The Allen (2010) and Munro (2011) reviews refer to the need for the holistic assessment of children to address their needs earlier. Munro also suggests that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) supports the early intervention agenda when used properly but that its status is confusing, particularly in light of the proposals for Education, Health and Care plans.

As part of a Department for Education (DfE) project, a report on early interventions highlights the potential for preventing future problems.

“Research into behavioural problems in younger children, (those aged three to five) shows that poor behaviour in the early years is a strong predictor for persistent problems in adulthood (Bonin et al., 2011). These problems include anti-social behaviour, criminality, poor relationships and substance misuse. Many early and later intervention approaches are targeted at tackling anti-social behaviour in children and young people and reducing the risk of social exclusion in later life.”

Easton, C. and Gee, G. (2012). Early Intervention: informing local practice (LGA Research Report). Slough; NFER

The report 'Safeguarding children across services' features further evidence for the necessity of early intervention work, whilst highlighting some of the challenges:

“The long-term, corrosive impact of abuse and neglect on children's long-term life chances is not sufficiently recognised, with the result that interventions can be indecisive or delayed...”

Furthermore there are also messages from research highlighting the importance of early recognition:

“Early recognition is necessary if long-term damage is to be avoided, because the effects of emotional abuse and neglect appear to be cumulative and pervasive. Both these types of child abuse have serious adverse long-term consequences across all aspects of development, including children's social and emotional wellbeing, cognitive development, physical health, mental health and behaviour.”

Safeguarding Children Across Services: messages from research on identifying and responding to child maltreatment, Carolyn Davies and Harriet Ward, DFE, May 2011

The case for effectively targeted early intervention work shows clear social and personal benefits for the children involved and society as a whole.

Thresholds

Despite this consensus about the value of early intervention, there is less agreement about thresholds, particularly between education services and social care. This was referred to by the interviewees and respondents for this report as one interviewee explains below:

“There is insufficient agreement and clarity over thresholds for referral to children’s social care and initiating proceedings in the family courts. Poor feedback from professionals working in these settings to other professionals can have a detrimental impact on inter-agency working.”

The difference between desired thresholds and the actual thresholds for access to social care has led to innovative practice and targeted early help, either internally or in partnership. This may have gone some way in alleviating some, but by no means all, of the tensions around thresholds. As John Guest summarises in his article *Understanding Child Protection Thresholds (Protecting Children Update, Optimus Education, 2011)*:

“Clear messages from the 2010 Working Together guidance are that social workers are not the answer to every problem, safeguarding is everyone’s business and universal services, such as schools and early years settings, have a crucial role to play, not only in identifying children at risk of significant harm, but also coordinating preventive services to provide targeted support at the earliest sign of problems (through the deployment of a ‘team around the child’ for instance).”

The provision of early help is achieved in many ways, for the whole school community which impacts on the lives of the children, as well as for identified vulnerable children. As John Guest emphasised, it is important that children are enabled to share concerns in order to identify the need for interventions. However, other opportunities to appropriately target early help may be the result of the curriculum, staff training or simply knowing and observing the whole school community and its changing needs.

Using the curriculum

The cost effective nature of preventative programmes in schools, such as SEAL which aims to develop emotional wellbeing, was highlighted by Munro (2011) who reported that for every £1 invested in social and emotional learning programmes, a saving of around £80 on future interventions was estimated. Other programmes which address the social and emotional needs of children have been assessed by Ofsted. In their report on the effectiveness of nurture groups to support children with challenging behaviour (July 2011) they recommended that DfE and local authorities:

“Take into account the substantial value of well-led and well-taught nurture groups when considering policies and guidance on early intervention and targeted support for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs.”

Having observed groups in school and inspected their evidence, indicating that over a third of pupils attending nurture groups made substantial progress with their behaviour and social and emotional skills, the report concluded:

“When the nurture groups were working well they made a considerable difference to the behaviour and the social skills of the pupils who attended them. Through intensive, well-structured teaching and support, pupils learnt to manage their own behaviour, to build positive relationships with adults and with other pupils and to develop strategies to help them cope with their emotions.”

Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviour through a Nurture Group Approach, Ofsted, July 2011.

Social issues

As well as incorporating the development of social and emotional skills within the curriculum, other social issues are raised within the safe environment to provoke discussion and enhance learning. This is an important aspect of the curriculum as it affords the opportunity for staff to monitor vulnerable pupils and may lead to disclosure, enabling the effective targeting of early interventions. Bullying cases for example are often the pathway to discovery of several other areas of concern.

Violence against women and girls

When looking at how issues of violence were addressed in schools, EVAW (End Violence Against Women) concluded that a whole school approach was needed for sustainable interventions. They argue that work needed to '*explicitly address human rights and gender equality issues, including gender stereotypes, power relations and control.*' Their consultation with young people found that they wanted to be taught about such issues in primary school.

The young people valued the information about relationships and violence, but the messages delivered need to be consistent and systematic, or the impact of this prevention work is limited. . According to Womankind's research,

"A 'whole school approach' means creating a strong institutional culture of respect, exemplified by staff conduct with each other and their pupils."

A different world is possible: Promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls, EVAW, 2011

Special safeguarding for pupils with special needs

A Cambridge University team investigated the bullying of children with SEN and outlined what schools can do about it as part of Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) project. The team emphasised the considerable impact interventions can have, but highlight the need to focus more on the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and on the social meaning of bullying behaviours. They call for small group work and special activities for vulnerable students such as lunch clubs, safe zones and positive playtimes.

*How can schools deal with bullying of children with SEN?
Caroline Oliver, Colleen McLaughlin & Richard Byers, (Cambridge University), 2011*

Homophobia

Children who are homophobic bullied or shunned can suffer immense harm, isolation and mental health problems. There is strong evidence that this behaviour starts as young as 10 years old, as a study of over 4000 young people demonstrated (*Safe to Play Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council 2008*).

The Teacher's report from Stonewall (2009) found that:

- More than 4 in ten primary teachers say children and young people, regardless of their sexual orientation, currently experience homophobic bullying, name calling or harassment in their school.
- 75% of primary teachers report hearing phrases like 'you're so gay' or 'that's so gay' in their schools.
- 40% of primary teachers reported hearing other insulting remarks such as 'poof', 'dyke', 'queer' and 'faggot'.
- 90% of staff have never received training on how to prevent or respond to homophobic bullying.

Homophobic bullying within school often escalates beyond school to the internet and mobile phones, leaving some pupils no escape from the torment. (The Cybersurvey 2011)

It is important to remember that it is not just gay and lesbian young people who experience homophobic bullying and that it starts in primary schools. The recommendations from Stonewall (2009) include embedding work within the curriculum, whilst also providing information and support to those affected.

The Internet

Children become adept at using new technology at ever earlier ages. Smart phones, Tablets and hand-held games consoles with access to the internet have brought new risks for young children and safeguarding will need to adjust to include 'e-safeguarding', with more attention being paid to the e-safety needs of younger children. The EU KidsOnline programme pointed out that teachers of ten year olds were least engaged with the internet, while the Cybersurvey found that this age group required intensive and age appropriate help to stay safe.

"The most pernicious effect of online anonymity is that it allows people to view and pass on abusive material without responsibility."

*Virtual Violence: protecting children from cyberbullying,
Emma-Jane Cross et al; Beatbullying, 2009.*

It is essential that any safeguarding work includes the online world as well as the offline world to truly fulfill the safeguarding duties placed on schools. This point was highlighted by Byron. She recommended that digital safety is taught across the curriculum in schools, that all staff should be up to date and, due to the rapid changes in technology, it should be an implicit part of continuous professional development for staff.

Do we have safer children in a digital world? Byron 2010

Identifying training needs

Training needs for staff to be equipped to safeguard children in a changing world have been identified time and time again whether by Ofsted, TDA or Byron. EAW illustrated that it takes training to gain confidence in specialist issues. Generalised training is not sufficient;

"School staff need to be trained and supported in order to gain confidence to lead discussions on issues related to violence against women and girls. Support from external agencies is valued by staff and students."

*A different world is possible: Promising practices to prevent violence against women and girls,
EAW, 2011*

Staff training could address the following amongst others:

- General preventative group work/ training on bullying to develop confidence in dealing with incidents and strategies for support.
- E-safety - this was highlighted Byron (2010), Ofsted (2010) and TDA (2011). There is a widely acknowledged need to improve the knowledge and expertise in the safe use of technologies. It also reinforces the belief that all staff have a responsibility for e-safety.
- Additional training on the needs of vulnerable groups (such as disabled children or those with SEN). This would support the effective monitoring of these groups to ensure early help is given when needed.

Developing knowledge of the whole school community

Munro (2011) observed that some of the best early years settings are those that know their communities well and are able to target support appropriately. This knowledge enables staff to identify vulnerable groups to target early help. 'Excellent relationships with families' was also mentioned by TDA (2011). Developing the relationships within the community enhances the

knowledge the school holds, whilst also encouraging parents to seek help earlier. This knowledge can aid the effective targeting of early intervention.

The development of outstanding safeguarding practices is crucial to achieving the best outcomes for children. Only when they are socially and emotionally secure can children reach their full potential, either academically or personally. The case for targeting early help seems straightforward; by providing support early, long term affects are ameliorated and crises are averted. Schools demonstrating outstanding safeguarding practice use their communication systems, curriculum, staff training and community knowledge to assess the changing needs of their children and effectively target early help. Many schools strive for this, what schools and children need is support to achieve it.

5. The Study Process

This was a small scale research study that employed a range of methods: a focus group activity with 28 children, specific surveys for key stakeholders: selected school staff (31); parents (45); education professionals (39); wider school staff and external partners (3) and semi-structured interviews with a range of school staff and children who were trained peer supporters (Problem Pals). The team visited four schools, from a wide geographical area that were selected not only because they had demonstrated outstanding safeguarding practices, but also to provide a broad demographic sample.

Consultation with Children

During the school visits in March 2012 the team conducted focus groups in three of the schools and a semi-structured interview with a group of Problem Pals. The focus groups used a variety of activities to gather evidence of the children's understanding of 'keeping safe' and how they felt their school helped them to keep safe. It culminated in a fiction based activity that required them to advise Goldilocks on how their school could help. The participating children were each provided with a support pack, including details of ChildLine, and reference was made throughout the activity to the support available to them, including the team's availability during the visit. Parental consent was sought before the children participated in the activity.

Consultation with selected school staff

This was achieved through the completion of the online survey and semi-structured interviews during the visits to schools. The survey covered different safeguarding aspects. The itinerary for the visits was negotiated between the team and the school and they were extremely generous in organising and resourcing meetings with a wide variety of school staff. All participating staff were given support packs, including details of helplines.

Consultation with parents and carers

The schools facilitated this on our behalf. Some parents and carers completed the online survey directly whereas others completed a paper copy which was later inputted by the research team. Support information for parents and carers was provided to the schools.

Consultation with external partners

Semi-structured interviews took place in the schools visited. External partners working with the school were invited by the Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) to take part and were generous in the time they gave to the project.

Consultation with education professionals

Throughout February and March 2012, 39 education professionals across England completed the online survey. The participating group was a combination of self selected professionals (some actively sought involvement after seeing the press release about the project) and those found through members of professional networks who forwarded the survey to relevant professionals.

Consultations with wider group of schools

Throughout February and March the research team were approached directly and indirectly by other schools wishing to take part. Whilst these schools did not fit the study criteria for achieving an 'outstanding' judgement for their safeguarding, many of them wished to highlight outstanding aspects of their work and it was thought this was worth capturing. Hence opened a separate online survey was opened and their responses collated.

6. Outstanding Safeguarding in Schools: an overview

The dynamic leadership style of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), in the schools found to be 'outstanding', led the whole school community in a committed, unified and responsive approach to safeguarding. They inspired a high degree of confidence, competence and responsibility across the schools.

Whilst effective leadership and management is widely recognised as crucial in safeguarding children, this study sought to discover *how* schools developed this in their settings to make their safeguarding practice outstanding. Furthermore, the views of the whole school community were gained in order to explore what made their schools safe places to be and how they encouraged a feeling of safety amongst the children and staff. Core themes were consistently identified in both the responses we received and the visits we made. These fell into two categories:

Values underpinning the school culture

- Communication and Relationships.
- Culture and Ethos.
- Pupil Empowerment.

Practical Implementation of the whole school strategy

- Leadership & Management.
- Policy and procedures.
- Training.
- Reflective Practice.

The identified themes are explored in further detail in this section of the report. In summary:

The **values** underpinning the school culture are exemplified by positive communications and relationships. The number and range of relationships being nurtured by the outstanding schools included staff, pupils, parents, external professionals and agencies. The schools demonstrated sensitivity and efficiency in sustaining these relationships so that they could act as broker between parents and agencies if required, because they had built up such a level of trust with parents in stressful situations. Their knowledge of external agencies and individuals within them enabled them to access advice and support on an informal basis as well as to trigger action when required. They listened to their pupils and supported their staff. The support given to staff included valuing them in their safeguarding role and providing respect and support to them; recognising their requirement for time to attend to a child's needs or gain support from the senior team. Pupils were empowered to take a role in supporting one another and were also taught about keeping themselves safe. Their views were sought and respected and they had high levels of trust in relation to staff members.

While the values described are interpersonal, a number of aspects were identified relating to their **practical implementation**. Strong and clear policies, supported by efficient and easily understood procedures were a feature of well run safeguarding strategies. Every staff member at every level had access to a designated person to report their concerns, however minor, without embarrassment in the knowledge that every concern was taken seriously.

7. Communication and Relationships

7.1 Schools successfully sustain multiple relationships

The schools visited by the research team work hard at maintaining excellent relationships with the whole school community, with external agencies and education professionals. The relationships that schools build across their communities are vital to their safeguarding role and especially for the provision of early help. Relationships were stressed by some respondents as being more important than policy and procedure and staff frequently emphasised how well they know their families and children. These relationships enabled them to work with families and be accepted in some difficult and challenging cases. Their relationship with the family was often used to introduce another agency which was accepted by the parents because they were brought in by the school.

The multiple relationships schools with which are juggling are illustrated here:

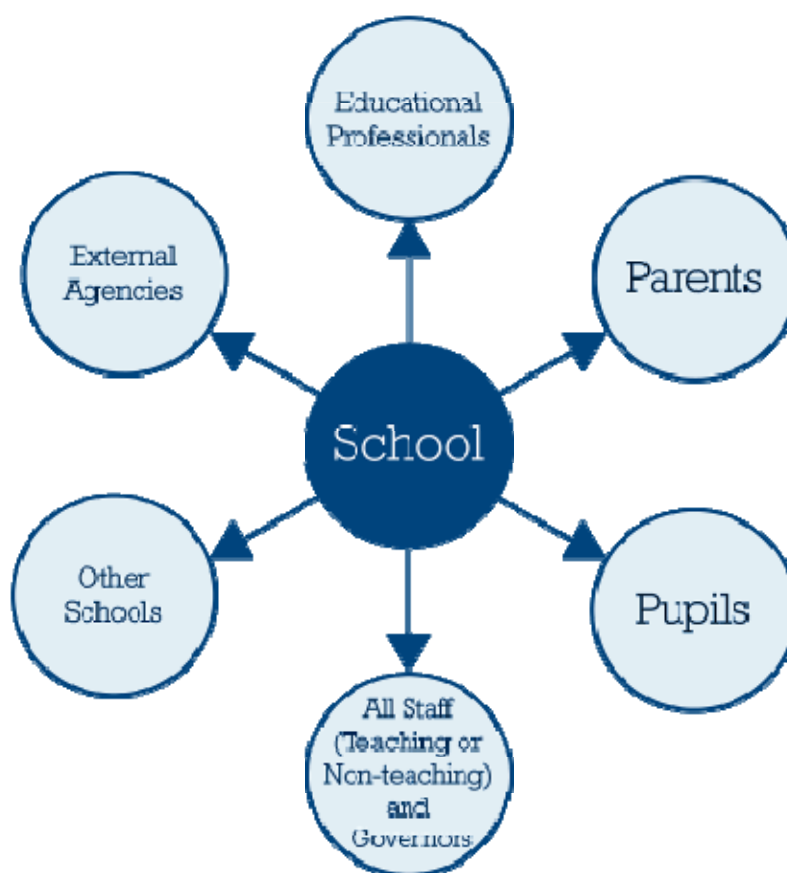


Figure 1: Relationships Diagram

School leadership teams undoubtedly play a significant role in developing, sustaining and modelling robust communication systems. However, this research showed that successful communication went further than the leadership team and this practice was firmly embedded across all members of the school community, all of whom clearly understood their responsibilities and the procedures involved. This sounds simple but involves great skill and tenacity. Hence the communication systems permeated all sectors of the community, with the welfare of the child being central.

Good communication was highlighted by respondents to all the surveys so its significance to the whole school community is apparent. Effective schools operated a combination of formal and informal communication systems. Hence, it is important to explore how this is achieved across the whole school community.

7.2 Relationship and Communication within the school staff team

Staff require a supportive relationship with the designated person and others within the whole school's systems as they enter the difficult waters of safeguarding. Without good support and being taken seriously if they voice a worry - however minor it may seem - it is unlikely that individuals will come forward with what they have noticed. In addition if they do remain involved in a case, they require ongoing support and feedback with an understanding of what needs to be kept confidential. This was apparent in comments in the selected staff survey:

"For many staff, supporting vulnerable children can be stressful and distressing, it is important for staff to be debriefed and supported in these situations."

(Head teacher, inner-city community school, in North of England)

"Ensuring that staff are protected - need to make sure that staff are well supported."

(Member of staff, Central London school)

The staff who responded to the surveys all valued the open and honest environment within their schools. These staff included a wide group: mid-day supervisors, teaching assistants (TAs), learning mentors, after-school club co-ordinators, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO), deputy head teachers and head teachers. Many comments identified the visibility of SLT who encouraged them to voice concerns and they were secure in the knowledge they would be listened to. They felt it was a two way process. The various methods of communication helped them to feel valued and supported, resulting in consistent use of the known systems and perpetuating good communication. A number of core principles were identified throughout the responses:

- Knowing the **systems** in place and how/ where to **record concerns**: there was a clear understanding by **all** staff. This was achieved through regular **training** which was consistent and reinforced the systems in place but also responded to identified concerns from staff. Some examples of systems were: a concerns log (either a book or file held in the office); inclusions file held in the classrooms; a confidential box for posting 'internal concerns forms'; individual books; and class books.

"All staff are aware of the 'cause for concern' sheets and how to complete them. Volunteers are informed of what to do if a disclosure is made."

(Member of staff, inner-city community school, North of England)

- Having **regular updates**: for example about confidentiality, changes to legislation and child protection guidance. This was achieved through small meetings, whole staff meetings, INSET days or written documents. In some cases it was a combination of these approaches.
- **Resources** which reminded them of what to do: these could be reminder cards, summary sections included in the staff handbook and notices in the staffroom.
- **Involvement in policy development**: this was done through staff meetings or INSET days. Whilst one person might take the lead, all staff felt involved and valued the open dialogue with the head teacher or other staff member responsible. When asked about what had worked well in the development and reviewing of policies, all of the respondents referred to good communication being vital.
- **Clear knowledge of who to approach if they were concerned**: this person differed in each school but invariably there was more than one member of staff to turn to, with the majority of respondents referring to the head teacher and SENCO.

"At School, all staff have a good knowledge of who to approach asap. The team then discuss the relevant action to be taken."

(Member of Staff, Central London school)

- **Easy access to SLT to share concerns**: the word 'visible' was frequently repeated in staff interviews when referring to the senior management. This made staff feel that they were able to raise concerns because SLT had a presence. They also knew they had unlimited

access to written systems, such as the concerns log, which SLT would monitor and respond to.

“The open door policy to the head teacher makes the staff more open about sharing concerns.”

(Member of staff, central London school)

- **A shared understanding:** individuals might not know all the information about a case but could trust that they would be told what they needed to know. Staff members were keen to emphasise that information was shared within the boundaries of confidentiality and there was a common understanding of why this was necessary. Schools displayed a high degree of sensitivity to the fact that staff members also lived in the community and did not need details of all cases, as there might be conflicts of interest.

“The school also handles confidentiality really well so that families feel that can trust them and that not all information is shared to all staff which is important as there are local people who work in the school.”

(Member of staff, central London school)

- **A shared responsibility** for safeguarding. This was not seen as the responsibility of a select few or indeed of just the teaching staff. All staff understood their responsibility. In some schools volunteers were also informed of their role in sharing concerns and how to do it.

“All staff are responsible for recording any changes in children's behaviour, appearance, ability to focus in class etc. A whole school recording system is in place. All concerns passed on to the Head teacher. A file is compiled so that the evidence can be monitored discussed with safeguarding team and parental involvement instigated, if and when appropriate.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

- **All staff communicate with each other** to offer support to identified children. Communication between all staff was respectful and they valued each other's strengths, regardless of their role.

“The school is run brilliantly and the support is great. I feel part of the school community even though I am just in for an hour.”

(Midday Supervisor, village school in Midlands)

“Children identified as potentially vulnerable or in need of talking to an adult, are identified time with a teaching assistant for pastoral support, this may be on an occasional or longer term basis.”

(Member of staff, central London school)

- **A recognised person** (or persons) who consistently monitors all concerns for patterns and reports back to staff. In many cases this was the head teacher or SENCO. Staff clearly valued this approach and felt they were given a forum for speaking, whilst also appreciating the importance of one person having a clear view of the whole picture.

“Pastoral team are vigilant with any change in behaviour, or a member of staff may notice and report it immediately - where it is acted upon ASAP.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“The gathered information is regularly assessed for any emerging needs.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“... all staff remain vigilant and pass 'cause for concern' sheets to the SENCO for even the most minor concerns, so that a single person can build up a bigger picture.”

(Member of staff, inner city community school, North of England)

When asked how records were used to monitor and address the needs of the children, the majority of responses referred to the monitoring of data by a consistent member of staff which facilitated an understanding of the bigger picture.

*“Individual books are used for some children for tracking. These are used when necessary and can help to engage parents as they need to be signed by them.”
(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)*

Information was shared with other members of staff -but only those involved in respect of an individual child- either through daily/weekly meetings or updates. The opportunity to raise any concerns and be involved in the follow-up was valued by staff, again emphasising the importance of these lines of communication. Similar communication processes were alluded to in all the responses:



Figure 2: Information Management Cycle

7.3 Relationships and Communication with the Children

The relationships with the children were at the heart of the safeguarding practice witnessed in the schools visited. Staff responses illustrated a clear understanding of what they wanted to achieve in their relationships with children and how fundamental this was in school. Fostering a consistent and positive relationship with the children enabled children to talk to them and access support early. The majority of parents said they felt their child would talk to someone at school if they were worried about something.

There was a clear agreement in responses from staff and parents that there were strong, respectful relationships with the children. This was illustrated by the multi-faceted approach to safeguarding: schools taught their children about keeping safe but also listened to their concerns and responded to them. This two way communication was clearly valued by the children we spoke to in the focus groups, and also by their parents who felt it empowered them to speak out when necessary.

Key elements to good safeguarding

'Creating a safe and secure working environment where children feel comfortable speaking to adults in school and know they can go to any member of staff if there is a problem.'

'Good relationships with children; children treated with respect and in a calm manner to encourage openness and trust.'

(Staff Survey, outstanding)

There were some common methods of communication with children in these schools:

"We have a very open and good sense of community. The children are always reminded that they can talk to any adult. The children are told not to keep secrets if they think an adult should know. These messages always come through in assemblies and PSHCE lessons."

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

- **Safeguarding messages communicated through a variety of means:** Schools used lesson time to raise specific issues, through PSHE or RE. These were reinforced through assemblies (or vice versa) and consolidated through a range of targeted activities:
 - curriculum activities
 - circle time
 - informing parents
 - life events
 - local partner visits
 - theatre visits or drama activities
 - Anti-bullying week activities
 - PCSO visits
 - newsletters
 - NSPCC talks or resources
 - ICT safe use activities
 - displays and notices in school

The overall aim of this approach is reflected in the staff comment:

'Generating knowledge among children – what to do if....'

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

- **Opportunities to talk to someone and be heard:** the schools gave examples of formal listening systems which were not treated in isolation from other systems but supplemented them.

“A teacher will speak to you in private if you are worried and will take it seriously.”

“When we don't feel safe we feel like we have been hurt.”

(Children's comments, Children's Focus groups)

Participating schools used a wide variety of listening systems: these are highlighted in Section 9 below. These included systems involving trained pupils; those provided in the classroom; and those available across the school. Relevant training for staff and pupils in these approaches and in identifying and responding to child protection concerns is essential.

Intervention which targeted the family was valued by many respondents and provided another listening forum for children. One head teacher felt such family work was essential if they were to fully support their vulnerable children.

Case Study

The Marlborough Family Group Early Intervention worker comes into school and works in partnership with the SENCO. They have between 2-10 families that attend their meetings and they have set up home/school targets, in agreement with the families, that are marked. They talk to the adults for the first half an hour, to air any issues, then bring in the children. They then do a task with the adults and the children and the children have an opportunity to talk. They also offer 1:1 parent support if the parent doesn't want to come to the group. This is not time restricted and is available to families for as long as they feel they need it.

Central London School

What was clear from our discussions was that schools, whilst establishing long term listening systems for all pupils, adapted these systems to suit the needs of the individual child. They recognised that providing children with a safe forum to talk can aid their early intervention work.

Case Studies illustrating individual listening systems

'Child at [after school] club has a dad in prison. The pupil was asked to regularly go to his teacher (as a positive male role model) under the guise of doing a job. He was able to talk and this has helped him 'chill out' and manage his behaviour.'

Member of staff, central London school

'Early intervention has kept him from being excluded. The school identified times and areas that were difficult and used this to help manage behaviour and provide support.'

Member of staff, village school in Midlands

'A group of boys were targets for bullies so we identified them and did some work with them around **self esteem**. There is a feeling that it is not just the high end behavioural issues that are a cause for concern but also the quieter ones.'

Member of staff, central London school

- **Involvement in school policy development** - children had a role in the review of policy and procedures, with some schools undertaking an annual questionnaire with pupils. This gave

pupils a sense of ownership of these documents and developed their shared understanding, particularly around issues such as bullying.

“Aspects of safeguarding may be evaluated through the annual pupil questionnaire. If this shows something unexpected, we would carry out further work. For example a recent questionnaire showed some ambiguity over bullying. We felt we needed to find out whether we have an issue with bullying or whether children misunderstood the question. A questionnaire was used at the start [of a week working on bullying] and then again at the end to assess understanding.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

- **Visual reinforcement of safeguarding messages** - careful thought had been given to the information displayed for the children. An example was the positioning the information at child’s eye-level on the wall.

“The school makes sure that there are posters around the school that highlight the ‘Golden Rules’, ChildLine and the message it’s good to talk.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

Displays with safeguarding messages are placed in areas where children congregate, such as their classrooms and areas seen by parents and visitors. Visual cues were also given to reinforce expected behaviour, in a positive way.

“Behaviour boards in classrooms - all children start with a sun at beginning of the day but if behaviour is naughty they can go to cloudy or rain. This visual aid encourages them to be good as they don’t want to see themselves go into cloudy/rain.”

(Member of staff, Primary school, North of England)

7.4 Relationships and Communication with Parents

“Ethos in the school has changed with this Head Teacher as it is now a whole family approach.”

(Member of staff, Central London school)

“There is a ‘Daily Open Door for parents.’”

(Member of staff, Primary school, North of England)

Staff were proactive in engaging parents and built up positive relationships in a variety of ways because they recognised that fostering supportive relationships with parents achieved better outcomes for their children. Such relationships sought to encourage parents’ support for a school intervention, provide them with support for their additional family needs (directly or via signposting), or a combination of both. The results of these efforts were reflected in parents’ responses to the survey. Parents said they would feel comfortable talking to any of the staff members as they were ‘friendly’, ‘approachable’ and ‘visible’. The majority of parents also felt supported by the school in their efforts to tackle specific issues, such as healthy eating or internet safety.

Fostering good communication with parents was seen as vital in successful early intervention work as parents could provide schools with the information to target the right support if they felt able to talk to staff and trusted the school processes. This was arranged in a number of ways:

- **Approachable staff** – many mentioned the ease of access to staff. Simple efforts, like making sure staff and SLT were visible at the beginning and end of the day were appreciated by parents and seen as important by staff.

“We have a good relationship with parents and children. We know our families, we are aware of events that may cause stress to families such as relationship break

ups, military deployment, redundancy etc. We monitor all children and any changes are noted and followed up if we have concerns. We have an open door policy therefore parents are more likely to come and tell us if they are struggling or having problems.”

(Head teacher, inner city school, North of England)

- The answers to the parents’ survey illustrated a **clear understanding of who they could talk to in school** if they had concerns about safeguarding or child protection.

Interestingly a number of parents differentiated between the level of concern and the member of staff they would go to e.g. if there was a minor concern they would go to the class teacher or if they felt it was of a more serious nature they would go straight to the head teacher. This clearly shows that parents have an understanding of the structure of the school and how the processes work.

- **Welcome involvement in different aspects of school life.**

This ranged from volunteering in classroom to developing policies. Good communication was seen as central to policy development and the schools tackled the process for this in different ways to ensure all members of the school community were aware of the policy documents. One school referred to the development of child and parent friendly versions which they were considering making readily available online. Some schools also provided induction for their parent volunteers.

- **Using different methods of communication –**

Parents and carers were kept informed of safeguarding in a variety of ways. A combination of formal methods (such as letters, web site, policies, prospectus and meetings) and informal methods (such as speaking in the playground or phone calls) were used. Although none of the parents and carers questioned said that the school had contacted them regarding particular safeguarding concerns about their child, the data collected showed that schools used various methods to engage with parents and, in turn, the parents felt that the school was accessible and supportive.

The deputy head teacher in one school held a meeting with all volunteers to explain what the process was if a disclosure was made or they had any concerns. They were also able to ask any questions so they felt comfortable in the school.

“Parents feel comfortable in school, we have a volunteer taskforce of about 30 parents who come and help out every Friday.”

(Member of staff, city community school, North of England)

The study also showed that parents had an awareness of the safeguarding messages being taught to their children, which they appreciated. Nearly all (94%) of the parents stated that they were supported to reinforce the taught messages at home (via leaflet, homework or worksheets). Schools understood that for the messages to be fully received and taken on by the children in their school, they needed to be reinforced at home.

- **Identifying vulnerable parents and proactively offering support:** A second positive outcome of staff being visible in the playground was the opportunity for them to observe parental interactions. Any concerns would then be raised following the usual processes and they could proactively engage with parents in a sensitive way. Some schools also recognized particular times of stress for families and sought to address these before issues arose. For example, one school had offered parents a support group during their child’s transition from Year 6 to Year 7.

Examples of early intervention working...

‘Just when the school provides support for a parent to help them with any issues they may be having at home with the child.’

(Member of staff, central London school)

Case Studies which illustrate the success of parental support in schools

'There was a little boy who was very quiet, shy and tearful. Mum was shy and had limited English. Mum has moved area after fleeing domestic violence and did not appear to be coping. The child was quite challenging at home. We had a meeting at school to discuss issues and it came out that she was thinking of returning to her partner so that the child was happy. I went with Mum, for support, to some coffee mornings and asked other mums what groups were good and again went with her. Mum has now made friends and has got support and the child is fine.'

Pastoral Support, Central London School

'I received a disclosure from a girl who was very tearful as she thought her mother had told her she didn't love her anymore and locked her out of the house and she ate her dinner sitting on the floor. I filled in the cause for concern form, passed it to the SENCO, who felt it was appropriate to speak to the parent to get full story and it turned out the mother was having problems with the child's older sibling and the child had got confused and thought it was her she was angry with. Support was offered to the mother and older sibling and the parent explained and comforted the child.'

Member of staff, village school, Midlands

'A girl with complex behaviour came to the school. The behaviour included pretending to be a dog, barking at and biting staff. The first element was to ensure that the child received a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) to support with learning. At the same time we engaged with Mum through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Child (TAC) process. It became clear that Mum had been mistreated as a child and did not have strategies to manage challenging behaviour other than physical chastisement. Through the TAC process Mum worked with a Family Support Worker, attended the parenting course and enrolled on a Teaching Assistant (TA) course. Through consistent parenting and support in school, by Year 6 there was no child protection involvement, the child achieved level 5 in English, Maths and Science and Mum now works as a TA in school.'

Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data

'During a recent time of parental death special care was taken to read specialist books with the child and lend these to her to take home, as well as supporting the remaining parent through this traumatic time.'

Head teacher, city school, North of England

Good safeguarding practice highlighted by a parent which illustrates the relationship with children:

'The school takes all the parents' concerns seriously. It acts promptly to resolve issues and this ensures that children constantly feel nurtured, supported and safe within that environment.'

7.5 Relationships and Communication with other agencies

“The more we have engaged in multi-agency working the more we learn how effective it is.”

Maintaining good relationships with outside agencies has enabled schools to trigger appropriate support. Without these interventions, some cases might have escalated into serious cases of child abuse and neglect resulting in a significant loss of education or the child being taken into care, as well as health and emotional problems. Responses to the surveys highlighted a vast array of outside agencies with which schools maintain relationships. These included:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer
- Family Intervention Project (Family Groups)
- Social Care
- Housing
- The Marlborough Family Group
- Voluntary agencies (NSPCC, Barnardo's)
- Police Community Support Officers (PCSO)
- Parent Support Adviser
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Speech & language therapist
- Educational Psychologist
- Behaviour Support
- Local multi-disciplinary teams
- Agencies at Team Around the School (TAS) meetings
- Adult services
- Play service
- Occupational therapy
- Drama therapy
- Specialist teachers
- Young carer's programme
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)
- Children's centre
- Counsellors
- Local schools Health (school nurse, health visitors)

When the relationships with other agencies were strong, better outcomes for the children were achieved. Staff members were able to illustrate these successes:

Case Study

'A recent safeguarding issue resulted in children being removed from home. As a school we felt that the children were not thriving in care and needed to be with family but better supported. Firstly, communication with social care resulted in the re-homing decision. The school then took a key role in the core group. Family intervention project came on board to support the family, reading recovery was established for the child, and the parent support adviser was deployed as daily contact. The children returned home today - exceptionally happy.'

Staff Survey, General schools survey data

'Attendance comes under safeguarding at this school - managed by (Educational Improvement Partnership (EPIC) who work with children to improve attendance. We have an attendance improvement officer who works across schools. We had a little Czech/Romany girl who had bad attendance, family had no money, struggling for clothes and food and had an overbearing landlord. A CAF was started and our attendance officer took them to housing office, benefits, tax office helped them set up a bank account and built a really good relationship with the parents. The girl's attendance eventually improved. We have a 2 weekly meeting with our attendance officer.'

Deputy Head teacher, inner city school, Midlands

However, the challenges in maintaining these relationships with other agencies should not be underestimated. Some of these included:

- Cutbacks were having an impact on provision for vulnerable children through loss of services
- Thresholds for some external agencies were much higher than schools would like, exacerbated by shrinking funds.
- Different timescales for other agencies.
- Lack of understanding of referral protocols to external agencies.
- Not knowing who to contact.

“We did try to produce a directory of local services/ agencies but it keeps changing so hard to keep up. Would be helpful to have one.”

(Member of staff, inner city school, Midlands)

“Housing - Only now are they starting to understand that they need to be involved with some of our families and attend meetings.”

(Deputy Head teacher, inner city school, Midlands)

Staff in outstanding schools were notable for their tenacity in pursuing their relationships with other agencies and findings ways of overcoming these challenges.

“It appears possible to have a high level of neglect / emotional abuse without anyone willing to become involved. In my experience, unless an injury has taken place, no-one is interested. Parents will deny any allegations made by children and then nothing further is done, expect the children never disclose again.”

(Staff Survey, General schools survey data)

The key elements for successful multi-agency working were identified by staff and external partners as:

- The designated person and other staff are given time to develop relationships.
- Openness and honesty.
- Keeping notes and being well prepared for meetings.
- ‘Mutual respect’ and good communication.
- A shared understanding that all agencies were working to the same goal - the best outcome for the child.
- Commitment and priority given to multi-agency working.
- Understanding the work of other agencies – for example some staff visited the local refuge to try and gain some understanding of the experience of their children.
- Knowledge and understanding of the people involved (including pupils and parents).
- Being able to manage stressful situations.
- Clear boundaries and expectations of each other.
- Support from the head teacher to deal with issues.

Good communication and a high level of commitment were common themes in the responses as to ways of overcoming difficulties. There were illustrations of creative practice and of the willingness of staff to repeatedly contact agencies and find alternatives to achieve the best outcome of the child. The ability to find alternatives was bolstered by the high level of commitment to multi-agency working. Staff noted the importance of support from their head teacher when working with other agencies, either for advice or for challenging their decisions. They felt this support was vital when they did not feel listened to by other professionals as it inspired them to keep trying.

“Often spend hours trying to track down the right person. Just don't give up. I have made a book of contact numbers for my successor so she has a starting point. If one agency goes we try another.”

(Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), central London school)

These key elements are reflected in the practical examples of communication processes in the responses to the study:

- **Setting initial planning meetings:** with new staff from other agencies to establish protocols, pass on information and clarify purpose and responsibilities.
- **Providing agencies with safeguarding information about the school:** safeguarding procedures were discussed with agencies when they first started working with the school. External partners valued access to the policies, and procedures in place in the school.

“Workable, visible policies. There is a dynamic approach to updating policies, open to debate... Policies are easy for non- school people to understand. Safeguarding policy file is accessible.”

(Member of staff, village school, North of England)

- **Attendance at meetings about children:** such as child protection conferences and other multi agency meetings. This was given a high priority and a staff member always attended. These meetings were also seen as opportunities to develop sustainable relationships with other agencies they could call upon when needed. Once these relationships were established, staff felt they provided access to invaluable sources of informal advice.

“More about building relationships with workers and if possible instead of writing letters we will visit them to discuss cases.”

(Pastoral Support worker, central London school)

- **Regular meetings where information is shared by the team within the school:** There was good information sharing, within confidentiality boundaries, regarding specific cases. These meetings were also seen as a chance to keep abreast of the work of other agencies involved. Other agencies also valued this as they felt they were able to discuss issues with staff rather than explaining themselves first. It also provided an opportunity to clarify how children could be referred to their service, resulting in early help being provided.

“Referral into our service is well known in the school and is revisited by the SENCO on a regular basis to raise its profile. Due to this the staff raise issues with the SENCO early. The staff have benefited from this service being here as their own expertise has been raised.”

(External partner, Central London School)

- **Providing resources to sustain communication between agencies** – this could be staff or simply providing a venue. External partners highlighted the school as a central point for meetings, whilst the SENCO encouraged meetings to take place at school as she felt parents often felt more comfortable in the familiar surroundings. The fact that the school was welcoming and meetings were not interrupted was considered important to the other agencies involved. Some schools were lucky to have dedicated meeting spaces but others afforded such a priority to this work they used other rooms, such as the head teachers office.

“I am really pleased with how the school has fed into the Family Intervention plan and supported both the family and the agency. They have also been good at providing venues for meetings and offering 1:1 support for the child.”

(External partner, village school, Midlands)

“SENCO has a valuable role as a conduit between school, LA and parents. SENCO encourages Child protection conferences to take place on the school site as it makes it more comfortable for parents and children.”

(External Partner, Central London school)

Staff resources were key in developing good communication with other agencies. One school felt this was only achievable by having one member of staff taken off timetable so they were available to contact other agencies. This could be the SENCO or another member of staff. In another example an external agency valued the support of a learning mentor, as she could often bridge the gap between teacher and parent.

“The school do not have to pay for the service but they have to donate staff time to work with them and to liaise with other agencies and parents and this school is very good at that.”

(External partner, Central London school)

- **Ensuring a good handover** where staff change so they are aware of the relevant history. This included a comprehensive discussion of previous issues, progress made and current work.
- **Proactively engaging with other agencies:** having established networks and through attending meetings, schools felt in a better position to approach relevant agencies when necessary.

“The school knew about the service before it was available here and sought it out and they make good use of it whereas other schools don’t.”

(External Partner, Central London school)

- **Making detailed notes** and identifying who is responsible for following up the actions.

“One family has now had in excess of 10 social workers so this has been paramount!”

(SENCO, Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

- **Having contact details** of relevant people to sustain a good level of contact
- **Persistence for the welfare of the child** – following up phone calls and ensuring agreed actions are happening. External partners felt supported by the school when chasing up additional agencies, such as Social Care, as they felt they weren’t alone. They also felt the tenacity of staff was a key factor in engaging the relevant agencies with their children.

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. The Inclusion Coordinator works doggedly with outside agencies following up to ensure action is followed through.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

- **Reflective Practice in their partnership working** – External agencies felt supported by the school and were open to discussions if services needed to evolve.

Case Study

'A new family joined the school and there were already 3/4 families attending the group when this family joined. The two children had been in foster care due to Mum's inability to cope and she wanted the children back. Mum came to the group and openly discussed her own issues (family suicide, sexual abuse etc) in front of all the families. This impacted on the group and the SENCO and early intervention worker felt it could have affected the future sessions so they asked the group about how they should handle this level of sharing and what to do next. The group felt very empowered to be involved in what to do next and felt that this type of discussion should not happen around the children but suggested extending the group for half an hour so parents could share more explicitly some of their issues. It has now become policy that the group meets first and then the children join them later. This was a learning experience for school staff about giving control to parents as well as beginning to develop a supportive community.'

External Partner, Central London school

The schools visited in the course of the study were involved with a wide variety of agencies and complex cases. Support strategies described were remarkably individualised for the specific child and schools attempted to provide these at the earliest opportunity, before there was a crisis. This is only possible where there is good communication between all sections of the school community: staff, children, parents and other agencies. The following examples illustrate where these processes have worked well for the benefit of the child/ children concerned.

Examples of successful multi-agency working

'Social care came to interview a child and I was there at the child's request'

Teacher, community school, Midlands

'There was a child with very bad head lice. I met with mum and she would treat them but they kept coming back. I asked if I could bring in the school nurse to discuss the problem and she agreed. This was kept up weekly so that mum kept on top of the treatment. Now the lice are gone, the child is not teased and children will sit with her again.'

Member of staff, central London school

Support started at the family group as Mum was struggling with parenting. She had significant drug use in the past. Mum's partner was not supportive with her three boys. The middle child was a challenge in class and was not reaching his academic potential. Mum was referred with the child to the Marlborough Education Centre and Mum took him there 4 mornings a week, attending school the rest of the time. This is an intensive service. They attended for 16 weeks, which was reviewed regularly and school staff visited both Mum and the child there. He made slow but good progress and went down to two mornings a week then graduated from there. There were many positive changes in this case including behaviour but mainly the relationship between mum and her children.

SENCO, Central London school

Social care removed a pupil in Yr 2 (now in Yr 4) due to alcohol issues with mum and behaviour issues with the child. Mum had self disclosed the issues and the multi agency approach helped identify the child needed to be removed for his own development. Because everyone talked to each other the relationships have stayed positive, even with Mum.

Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data

Particularly good multi agency work is carried out by a Family Intervention Project (FIP) worker. The worker liaises with the family and other agencies. She has supported the child within the family in school through 1-1 work, accompanying trips, attendance at meetings and availability on the phone.

Head teacher, village school, Midlands

A family with three children in school was supported by enabling access to a range of external services through completing a CAF (Common Assessment Framework). This support included work with Family Services to help with parenting issues, NSPCC support for the middle child as a result of an incident outside school, speech therapy for the middle child, behaviour support for the eldest and middle child, PCSO support to address behaviour concerns about the eldest and middle child outside school, behaviour plans for these two children within school and a range of interventions to support all three pupils in school.

Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data

A mother on kidney dialysis was not able to meet her child's needs. The family had been involved in the Team around the Child (TAC) process for some years. The parent became more dependent on the Family Support Worker. Through having a good relationship with the Manager of the Helpdesk, Child Protection plans were put in place and the child was taken into care.

Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data

7.6 Relationships and communication with other schools

In schools rated as 'outstanding', excellent sharing of information on vulnerable children took place. It was remarked on as a vital component of good practice, particularly in schools with transient populations. Information was shared concerning a vulnerable child at times of transition or transfer, and between the nursery or early years setting and the reception class.

Times of transition can be particularly challenging for maintaining communication. The survey responses focused on two areas: liaison between the relevant staff and the handover of the records themselves. (Examples of how this was achieved are given in the section on Leadership and Management.) Good links with other schools prevented children becoming 'lost' to the local authority. One head teacher referred to a number of instances where he felt his relationship with other schools had meant he was able to obtain relevant information quickly and, as a consequence, get the right support in place for the children in a timely way.

8. Ethos and culture of a school

All members of the school community mentioned ethos and culture in surveys and interviews. However, it is difficult to encapsulate the ingredients which produce a positive ethos and culture within schools in order that others can emulate it.

The study team experienced it on visits to the schools: it included the welcome received by the team, the interactions witnessed between staff and with the children, the pride in their school, the trust in each other, the support provided and the care given. Whilst it may start with the head teacher, the school ethos underpinned and was fundamentally important to all the elements of outstanding safeguarding practice highlighted in this report.

Definition:

‘The characteristic spirit and beliefs of a community...’

Oxford English Dictionary

“Ethos of the school is the best feature and allows everyone to be open.”

(Education Professional, survey data)

When referring to the ethos of their school some common elements were highlighted:

Openness

This word was used frequently in responses but in a variety of ways. Respondents referred to ‘an openness in the school in how they speak to parents’. It was the respectful way staff spoke and listened to others, which was reciprocated. This was valued by parents and encouraged them to approach the school with problems. This led to issues being tackled before they escalated and to schools being able to target early help more effectively.

“There’s a strong ethos in school, with a clear message about care and support for children. The children appear to be happy in school. Themes in assembly/SEAL etc are strong Christian values. There is a strong pastoral element to the school that all staff are responsible for. This is supported by HT and governors, with good support for staff, which carries through to pupils. Whole school community - all involved and responsible.”

(Member of staff, central London school)

The fact that members of SLT were visible and open to discussions instilled confidence in the rest of the staff. They then felt they could raise concerns without fear and were able to be open with others. Children described being able to talk to numerous trusted adults within their schools and felt they all had someone to turn to.

“Staff feel comfortable and encouraged to go to the Head, there is very much an open door policy.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

Respect

The different sections of the school community demonstrated a great deal of mutual respect.

“The children know we care and trust us. Children are treated as individuals i.e. not judged on the behaviour of their siblings if in same school.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

The parents showed respect for the staff in the schools and were able to describe instances where they felt school had helped them. They felt they could approach the school when necessary and that their views and concerns would be taken seriously and dealt with in a timely manner. Parents

indicated that important factors in keeping their children safe were the creation of a sense of community and a general ethos of care and respect that the children felt part of.

“Teachers are understanding and can help.”

“Being safe means: Knowing that someone cares for you.”

(Childrens comments from focus groups)

The children in our focus groups felt safe in school and spoke about staff in their responses. Parents’ comments reinforced the value and respect given to their children. The good practice highlighted by education professionals also referred to a culture of respect. Time and again staff mentioned their ability to take any concern to SLT. The response to their concerns acknowledged their professional judgement and, in turn, fostered their respect for the SLT.

“Giving children a clear message that staff are interested in listening to them.”

(Education Professional, survey data)

Consistency

All respondents appreciated the consistent manner in which issues were dealt with, whether this was the by staff, procedures used or sanctions and rewards which were given.

“Creating resilience and a comfortable environment..... All staff strictly follow the same procedures. They are consistent with rewards and sanctions”

(Member of staff, Primary school, North of England)

Supportive culture

This was embedded in the schools and experienced by the whole school community. The whole staff group felt supported by SLT in their safeguarding practices and with the potential emotional impact cases had on them as individuals.

“School is a caring community - adults for adults, adults for children, children for children, children for adults. Staff try to form strong relationships with parents and make them feel involved in school and able to ask for support when they need help. School runs parenting course for parents of younger children which help to build strong relationships with parents early on.”

(Staff Survey, outstanding schools survey data)

There was a desire to support the whole family where possible, with the understanding that if they succeeded it would lead to better outcomes for the child. This was never more apparent than when schools were asked about thresholds for their early intervention work.

The data was interesting because the initial response is not reflected in the detailed comments. Two thirds of respondents stated they had not developed ‘thresholds’ and the remaining third said they had. However, the detailed comments indicated that these responses were misleading. Many respondents simply did not have a threshold and were actively encouraged to report any concerns however minor –some may have interpreted this as a threshold not having been agreed. However, it is suggested here that the comments illustrate that this ‘zero’ threshold is a positive decision and should be valued as such.

“Threshold doesn't exist - it is whatever is worrying you.”

(Member of staff, inner city school, North of England)

“Any concern is a concern. Nothing has a threshold.”

(Member of staff, central London school)

Concerns may be based on behaviour, attendance or achievement but respondents highlighted the need to know the children well and consider their case on an individual basis. Some schools paid particular attention to identifying vulnerable groups so they could monitor those children more closely.

Schools valued engagement from parents as an aid to supporting children when issues arose. There was a clear agreement for the need for early intervention from the respondents and the low or non-existent threshold enabled this to happen.

“I'd look less at paper and policies, monitoring and evaluation and concentrate on the ethos and doggedness with which staff pursue their concerns.”

(Education professional, online survey data)

Taking the time to get to know families, either through the office staff, learning mentors, family liaison workers or simply being in the playground to observe interactions, meant they could put support in place and pre-empt situations arising. Having developed relationships with other agencies, schools were able to address these issues in a timely manner by accessing the right support.

“We have a good relationship with parents and children. We know our families, we are aware of events that may cause stress to families i.e. relationship break ups, military deployment, redundancy etc.. We monitor all children and any changes are noted and followed up if we have concerns.”

(Head teacher, city school, North of England)

Striving to improve their safeguarding practice

Despite being rated as ‘outstanding,’ schools which were visited continued actively to seek to improve their safeguarding practice. Using their monitoring systems, one school had noted a steady increase in numbers of vulnerable group of children (Looked After Children) and had been looking into developing a support group for them. Others spoke of extra resources they had identified or adjustments to their support systems. What was common to them all was their desire to improve in order to secure better outcomes for the children.

Safeguarding was at the heart of these schools, not only on paper but in practice. It permeated every area of school life and community. This is how the ‘ethos’ so fundamental to their good practice is best expressed.

“Our safeguarding approaches are overarching and look at the bigger picture. They include everybody, not just the vulnerable children - this includes staff and all adults involved with the school.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding Schools survey data)

Comments from parents:

‘There is a general ethos throughout the school for caring about one another. The children all know there is someone to talk to if they need to and the head is very approachable.’

‘I think discipline is generally excellent at school. The children understand their boundaries clearly and I think that helps them feel secure. I know it has become less fashionable to be strict but it actually works!’

‘There is a very strong sense of community at the school. The children are treated with respect and as a consequence they are confident and feel able to trust the staff.’

‘Building a culture of rights of individuals and openness for all.’

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

9. Listening Systems, Support and Pupil Empowerment

Parents and staff spoke of the confidence of their children and their participation in the school. This was certainly evident in the schools we visited and was achieved through a variety of means.

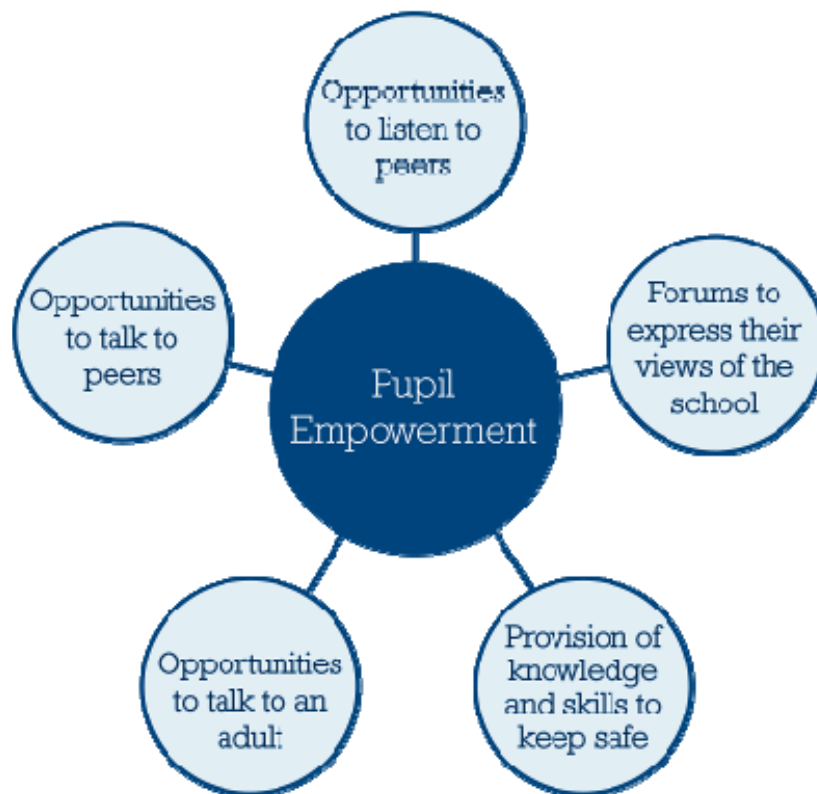


Figure 3: Pupil Empowerment Diagram

9.1 Opportunities to talk

The different opportunities to be heard are described as the 'listening systems' within the school and these were referred to earlier (see 'Relationships and Communication with their children'). The opportunity to talk and be heard empowered pupils to raise issues important to them. Respondents referred to a wide variety of methods which they had seen or experienced. These were a combination of pupil led and adult led, the most common one in classrooms being the circle time. Other examples given included:

- Worry boxes
- Nurture groups
- Circle of friends
- Dedicated space/ quiet corner
- Time with TA
- Peer support

Some of these examples are also reflected in the listening systems highlighted by education professionals, although they additionally refer to 'Talk Time' as a strategy in common use. Most significantly, however, is the fact the two most popular systems, circle time and worry boxes, are the same for both groups of respondents, despite the geographical diversity of these groups.

“Talk Time, run by Action for Children, is currently available to refer children for counselling on a range of areas such as bereavement, separation, emotional issues etc.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

Participating schools used a wide range of listening systems. It is important to note that relevant training for staff and pupils in these approaches and in identifying and responding to child protection concerns is essential.

Listening systems involving trained pupils	Peer Support – this operated in all the schools visited, but was tailored to the needs of the school. The groups offered listening support to their peers under different names: Problem Pals, Rainbow Rangers, Friendship Squad, Peer Mentors. These groups were given training for their role and supported by an identified member of staff.
	Buddies – Schools operated a system where new pupils were given a ‘buddy’ to help them settle in. This system was also offered to pupils who were identified as vulnerable if they want it.
	“Circle of Friends” – These groups were used to support pupils with difficulties. “Circle of friends” is an approach to enhancing the inclusion, in a mainstream setting, of any young person who is experiencing difficulties in school because of a disability, personal crisis or because of their challenging behaviour towards others.

Listening systems in the classroom	“Talking Partners” - This is a speaking and listening intervention programme that involves a small group of children working together over a specific time period. This can be used for a number of reasons and can help grammar and the organization of ideas as well as with safeguarding and welfare concerns
	Worry Boxes – these were available in classes and children could write their worries on a slip and post them. Teachers then spoke to the children individually or used the issues raised as a stimulus for circle time sessions.
	Star Group - this is a group of student volunteers who work to improve the lives of refugees in England. They provide a range of services including classroom support, homework clubs and youth clubs
	Silver SEAL¹ Intervention Silver SEAL group work supports an early-intervention approach for young children who need additional help to develop their social, emotional and behavioural skills. Silver SEAL is based on the principle that some children will benefit from exploring and extending their social, emotional and behavioural skills by being members of a supportive, small group that is facilitated by an empathic adult.

¹ Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning.

Listening systems across the school

Family Support - in one school the Marlborough Family Group Early Intervention worker liaised with the SENCO to run a family group. In another school a Family Liaison worker runs a homework and gardening club as an informal way of supporting vulnerable pupils. The children use it as a safe place to be and build a trusting relationship with the worker. Support was also accessed from local authority multi-agency teams for families in difficulty (one school referred to the Dinosaur school for Family Support work).

Nurture Groups - A nurture group is a small group of 6 to 10 children / young people based in the school and staffed by two supportive adults. Nurture groups offer a short term, focused, intervention strategy, which addresses barriers to learning arising from social / emotional and or behavioural difficulties, in an inclusive, supportive manner. This is done by developing social skills in group activities. To be effective, a range of techniques are used by skilled staff to help children to re-join their classes.

Lunchtime and Breakfast Club – these were seen as informal settings where children were given the opportunity to talk if they wanted to. In one school there was a lunchtime nurture group where children could drop in if they needed the support.

“Talk Time”- run by Action for Children, this counselling service was available in one school. Children were referred for counselling on a range of issues such as bereavement, family separation, emotional difficulties etc. One school employed a counsellor to offer one-to-one counselling for children.

“Time to Talk” – this counselling service from Relate provides an opportunity for a young person to explore and understand the issues and problems they might be experiencing confidentially and therapeutically.

Behaviour Support – Is a team that works proactively to support children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in school.

School Council – A group of elected children who represent their class. They seek the views of their class on specific issues, usually during circle time, and then feed them back to senior staff during school council meetings.

School Nurse - School nurses provide a variety of services such as providing health and sex education within schools, carrying out developmental screening, undertaking health interviews, administering immunisation programmes, and supporting parenting groups.

Speech and Language Therapist – their expertise was valued in helping to understand pupils and the support their families might need.

Responsive Support – Some schools referred to additional Teaching Assistants who were provided by the local authority when pupil’s needs were identified. Additional staff availability was also illustrated by another school:

‘We have staff available to deal with all sorts of support. From bereavement, social skills, loss of a parent, divorce, abuse, prison, etc.’

9.2 Adult led listening systems

Circle time was used for many purposes: as an opportunity to discuss wider issues; to express and discuss feelings; to model and develop social skills; and to enhance class relationships. Whilst circle time may initially look like a solely adult-led activity, and in many cases it is, the use of worry boxes enabled pupils to lead the content of the circle time in a safe way. Circle time was also used as a targeted approach in some schools.

'All classes have worry boxes and teachers use these on an individual basis or for circle time.'

"They do certain Circle Times for certain children i.e. year 6 girls."

(Members of staff, central London school)

"The worry box is for people to use if they are worried - if you are frightened you can use the worry box."

(Child comment, Children's Focus groups)

Adults valued the opportunity to listen to the children as a means of monitoring their needs. In one school, children assessed as potentially vulnerable or needing to talk to an adult were given time with a teaching assistant (or learning mentor) for pastoral support, on an occasional or longer term basis. Some schools had developed special groups such as social skills or nurture groups to address the needs of specific children. These operated at different times but staff referred to the opportunity for pupils to 'dip in and out' when they needed it, making it an active choice for pupils.

One-to-one contact was also offered, such as with school counsellors. A significant proportion of our education professionals had witnessed this in schools. There were also examples of individual listening systems to cater for individual needs (see section within Communication theme).

One school was also keen to develop their response to a recognised need. As there had been a significant increase in the number of looked after children on roll, the deputy head teacher was looking to establish a support group for them so they realised that they were not alone.

Additional suggestions from staff and educational professionals included:

- *Philosophy for children;*
- *NSPCC schools ChildLine service currently operating in over 30 of our primary schools.*
- *Safety Circle and Network of Support;*
- *Small group activities for vulnerable children: Sparkle Clubs'*

Parent's example of a safeguarding situation that was handled well:

'A bullying situation was handled by the class teacher when my daughter approached her when she felt intimidated by another child. The 3 children involved talked things through with the teacher and worked out their own solution assisted by the teacher. I feel the small incident was handled well early on to stop it becoming a big problem.'

Inner city school, North of England

9.3 Pupil led systems

"Playground pals know not to spread rumours and they will help you."

(Child comment from focus groups)

Peer support, in its many guises, took place across the majority of schools surveyed and in all of the schools we visited. Various names are given to forms of peer support: Problem Pals; Playground Pals; Friendship Squad; Peer Mentors; Rainbow Rangers. The children were formally trained and supported by an identified member of staff. Two thirds of the children's focus groups referred to their version of peer support when asked who they would talk to and children valued being able to talk to peers. When asked 'What does it mean to feel safe?' one response was:

“Having friends and Playground Pals to help and support you.”

(Child comment from focus groups)

Thus demonstrating how much other children valued being able to talk to their peers. We were fortunate to meet with Problem Pals in one primary school. During our discussions it was clear that there were clear stages in the development of their role:

- **Recruitment** - to become a Problem Pal, children had to complete an application form and have an interview to explain why they wanted to do it. One of the group had wanted to join because they had problems in the previous year and received help, so they wanted to ‘give something back’.
- **Training** - once they had completed the interview process, children received two days’ training. The group demonstrated pride in their role and a mature understanding of its limitations. The training had clarified when they should pass their concerns on to staff as well as providing other skills.
- **Daily routine** - they worked on a rota basis and observed the playground. Their children could make an appointment to have a chat about any worries in the Rainbow Room, where they listened to the children and helped them to find a solution.
- **Monitoring** - They also had a monitoring system so if a child had been to them more than six times they would automatically pass their details to a teacher.
- **Ongoing support** - this was provided by a member of staff and this is vital for the safety and welfare of the children involved.

These are critical ingredients in all peer support initiatives. The discussion revealed how empowered the children felt by being trusted to help their peers. They valued the opportunity to listen to their peers and help them.

Education professionals had seen the approach as part of an anti-bullying strategy. One mentioned observing peer supporters for the anti-bullying charter, but the approach addressed a range of other issues. The Problem Pals listed: bullying problems; friends falling out; and ‘abused outside of school’ (on their way home). The importance of the Problem Pals was reinforced by resources: such as staff time and a room with comfortable cushions on the floor. The scheme also provides children with the opportunity to manage risk and develop resilience for themselves.

Parents viewed listening systems as safeguarding approaches to address such issues as ‘stranger danger’, bullying and child abuse and neglect and when asked about the systems used by the school, referred to peer support or buddying as part of the strategies. The recurring themes from parents were the timely, careful and respectful way the school dealt with these issues, that the approaches empowered pupils to be part of the solution and that the peer schemes made their children feel supported and confident.

‘Circle of friends’ was commonly described by staff and education professionals, with 28% of the latter having seen it in practice. This was used as needed and was another opportunity for children to experience the responsibility of supporting others.

“Circle of friends to help a child settle.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

Although our survey differentiated between classroom systems and whole school systems, the staff we spoke to did not do so and often referred to the same systems (such as circle time) for both. This implies that these systems were so consistently used across the whole school that they were viewed as whole school systems.

9.4 Forums for children to express their views

Different methods were used to enable pupils’ views to be expressed. A common approach was the use of questionnaires on different issues. These ranged from assessing anti-bullying work, where

children felt safe, or an audit of relevant policies, such as behaviour, so they felt they had ownership of these.

Education professionals highlighted pupil participation in surveys and consultations, such as an 'I stay safe' consultation, as good practice. Many respondents referred to school councils in their comments, but did not include them as a listening system. Hence they seem underrepresented in our data. However, all the schools we visited had a school council and valued their contributions. One education professional described a school council which also offered a support group for other children. Other school councils supported school developments, such as redesigning the playground or ordering play equipment, and provided a line of communication between each class and the senior leadership team.

"Pupil Voice heard through the school council with representatives from each year group."

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

One education professional highlighted the involvement of children and young people in their Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). They have developed a children and young people's group and facilitate regular meetings, with the agenda set by the children. This has culminated in two recent safeguarding events (for primary and secondary schools) showcasing good practice from schools in the area and enabling shared learning. A further example of an LSCB partnership was the 'I stay safe' project. Young children were given intensive training around safety matters including bullying and domestic abuse. They developed jingles at a workshop at the local radio station which were then broadcast at peak times when parents and children were travelling to and from school. The children also designed and coloured in folded paper 'chatterboxes' with safeguarding messages on them to stimulate discussion. These have since been issued to thousands of primary school pupils across the local authority, with related lesson plans which involve children in the safeguarding agenda.

Examples of outstanding safeguarding practice highlighted by Education Professionals:

'Where school engage their pupils in the safeguarding conversation and their pupils express their views in either school councils or 'Feeling Safe' Groups. In many schools pupils have organised questionnaires to find out where the pupils feel safe or unsafe. One school has organised a 'Feeling Safe' Day. A PowerPoint presentation showing what they did is available. Another school is planning a 'Feeling Safe Day.'

'Some of the best e-Safety I've seen is when schools share knowledge and information and recognise that pupils need to be actively engaged and empowered. Schools who teach children about acceptable behaviour and how to manage risks rather than blocking/banning children from using the internet develop more confident learners and reduces children's vulnerabilities.'

Education Professionals' online survey data

9.5 Provision of safeguarding skills and knowledge

Staff identified a range of methods for delivering safeguarding messages such as: assemblies, curriculum, informing parents, life events, external visitors (for example; the Police Community Safety Officer (PCSO), local partner agencies, NSPCC), Anti-Bullying week, newsletters, circle time, internet safety, and displays. (See also those described at 6.3 above). There are clearly some common features with those approaches highlighted by education professionals.

Other examples of delivering safeguarding skills and knowledge:

- *Junior Citizenship scheme*
- *A specially written personal safety curriculum*
- *Nurture groups*
- *Visits to the local Fire Service*
- *Single day sessions on domestic violence*
- *Early education about safe relationships*
- *Assemblies and lessons on internet safety and cyberbullying*
- *Specialist services visiting schools.*
- *Use of Staying Safe Materials; assemblies and workshops by ChildLine Schools Service'*
- *Teaching Protective Behaviour Programme generically to young people*

While assemblies were the most common location for the introduction of skills and knowledge about staying safe, and guest speakers are frequent visitors, in smaller groups the subject can be covered in greater depth and reassurance and support provided. The vast majority of this teaching took place in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons and their importance is strongly emphasised here. Circle time offered more opportunities for discussing subjects and working in small groups with their class teacher.

Respondents were keen to comment upon the inclusion of issues of abuse and neglect. Good practice examples illustrated that staff and education professionals feel these should be explicitly taught. Indeed some felt it was crucial knowledge which could equip children to protect themselves.

“A key element of good safeguarding is: ‘Enabling open discussion about different types of abuse.’

(Education professional online survey data)

One school held an annual closed assembly with just the head teacher and a senior member of staff where they discussed, in a sensitive way, the different forms of child abuse and reinforced who the children could talk to and how the school helped to keep them safe. They used the assembly as a confidential forum (within safe limits) to encourage the children to talk. Every year, issues were raised by the children following the assembly and the head teacher felt it was an important part of teaching their children about safeguarding. A pertinent comment from a staff respondent is worth repeating here, as it was clear there was a common aim amongst staff towards.....

‘Generating knowledge among children – what to do if....’

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

Best practice examples for support for children from Education Professionals

'Case studies have been written which show the impact of the Buddies and Peer Mentors. Termly data is collected which evidences the impact of their support. Evaluations from the Students 'Feeling Safe' group show the impact of the information given to them at network meetings.'

'Prevent agenda is delivered by Police-two day Prevent Course is delivered by Prevent staff. Input from 'New Directions' drugs and substance abuse support; Domestic Violence forum; Road Safety; Cycling proficiency; Warning Zone. All schools have support from Local Police who have plans/video presentations training for areas such as use of fireworks; road safety; stranger danger. 'Strive' support for young Muslim girls.'

'Lunchtime nurture groups where children dip in and out.'

'I delivered a training package for a group of schools (Primary) which included staff training, pupils training and parents' support. We 'trained' a group of year 5/6 pupils to become e-Safety ambassadors and they then helped the school to evaluate and develop their practice. The pupils delivered lessons and assemblies to other pupils and held workshops for parents. Pupils reported that they felt safer and more confident online and schools noticed that incidents of cyberbullying decreased.'

'Any needs of young people from years 4 - 6 are assessed within school: educationally, socially and personally. Children's needs are identified and various different types of intervention are provided, such as 'Captains table' and young mentors. Police Volunteer Cadets support and offer positive role models. These young people then have positive steps to work towards.'

10. Leadership and Management

For a school to be able to respond effectively to child protection and safeguarding concerns, there is a consensus that good leadership and management is central and all surveys and interviews highlighted this. However, it is not enough to simply emphasise the importance of good leadership. This study has facilitated a close look at what good leadership means to the various stakeholders, and the effect that it can have on the school overall.

10.1 Availability of leaders to the whole school community

In all the visits to primary schools it was clear that the head teacher was pivotal to how well safeguarding was incorporated into the school and there was a clear understanding that if a child is not safe they are not in a position to learn. There were members of staff throughout the school who had key safeguarding roles and responsibilities that both pupils and parents responded to.

A point emphasised by both external partners and parents was the high visibility of senior staff in the school. One of the objectives for this was to build relationships with parents and carers with the aim of breaking down any barriers of either real or perceived hierarchy that might prevent the parent sharing important information with the school. This aim was reiterated in the external partners' survey. With this increased presence around the school, pupils and their families felt that the school is interested in them, wanted to help and could be in a position to support them at times of need. By creating this environment through leadership and example, the schools intention is to create a safer culture for children.

“Staff that are; ‘interested in their pupils and work well with families.’”

(External Partner online survey data)

10.2 Safeguarding is a clear priority

A strong feature of all the schools visited is that they had a special educational needs coordinator who had a non-teaching role for all or part of the week. The management of the schools had identified the need to provide the time necessary to ensure the correct support is in place for pupils and to liaise with the relevant outside agencies. By prioritising this agenda and allocating such resources the profile of safeguarding is raised throughout the school. This assists the development of strong relationships with outside agencies and families.

“It is particularly good that the SENCO is off timetable for most of the week so she can focus on safeguarding work.”

(External Partner, central London school)

10.3 Clear roles, responsibilities and systems

A key feature in schools achieving high standards of child protection is presence of clear systems in the school. There was clarity in the participating schools of roles, responsibilities and the ways in which each member of staff contributed. This created a cohesive structure and a shared vision. Parents were aware of these roles and of the way the school would respond to different levels of concern. This was mirrored in the discussions with the pupils about levels of concern and the member of staff they would approach.

The study schools differed considerably in terms of demographic and geographic features, yet a proactive system which could raise the standard of safeguarding was something that they were all able to achieve. This prevents cases being ‘stuck’ and shows that the school is confident that its escalation process will ensure that children are receiving the best support. It was a positive feature identified by staff, external partners and parents. The head teacher was seen as someone who would challenge on their behalf if they felt that a pupil was being denied their statutory entitlement. This advocacy role is an important one for schools who strive to improve their practices.

10.4 Information Sharing

The systems for raising concerns which were operating in the schools we visited were varied but the core principle was that **all** concerns, regardless of the level, were recorded and monitored. They were collected in different ways, individual to each school, but all were monitored regularly to ensure issues were picked up quickly. It was clear from all staff interviewed that they were confident the leadership team took their concerns very seriously and that they would be used to inform practice and allocate resources.

Information sharing was conducted in a different way at times of transition. Each of the schools visited had their own systems for transferring information when a child was leaving or joining their school. However, difficulties arose when other education providers did not follow a similar system. As described above, head teachers felt the relationships they built with other schools enabled the transition process to be most effective.

Staff highlighted examples of information sharing:

Good practice example:

'Having a 'whole school vigilant' approach to safeguarding, with all staff taking equal responsibility for the recording and reporting of concerns.'

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

Face to face/ Telephone meetings	Handover of records
If there is a Common Assessment (CAF), we invite secondary school and local authority to our last 2 meetings before the child leaves to discuss child protection issues. We have a good relationship with Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) at the local secondary school.	If the Head teacher knows where the child is going, he delivers the file personally
If a new student joins school mid-term some schools ring and share information, if not the Designated Senior Person (DSP) for child protection calls them to ask if any relevant information is needed about the child.	All files are sent recorded delivery or by courier to the designated teacher, in a double sealed envelope to ensure confidentiality.
We meet with Year 7 teachers to highlight concerns (behaviour etc) and any confidential records get passed through the Head. (One school is reluctant to share too much about behaviour so that the child can have a 'clean sheet')	If they do not know where the child has gone then the school keeps the file and lets Social Care know.
A meeting is held with appropriate partners involving the new school - this could be the teacher, head teacher, pastoral team or SENCO. In one example a Teaching Assistant (TA) was also involved and supported pupils in their visit to ease their transition	An inclusion folder is kept for each class and discussions with the previous class teacher follow each year group transition
Liaison meetings take place with secondary and feeder infant schools. Records will be handed over as children transfer school. Where appropriate, colleagues will be invited to attend multi agency meetings prior to transfer.	The Safeguarding officer shares records deemed appropriate with the receiving school. Where Social Care is involved the records to be shared are agreed.

10.5 The management of data protection/ confidentiality issues

Due to the large amount of information schools have about their children and families, staff, other agencies or other schools may request to see it. Half the study schools gave a detailed response to this question and there were some common elements in their practice. Staff showed great sensitivity to the complex issues involved and a detailed knowledge of their school communities and how this impacted on how and when they shared information. They had overcome challenges in a variety of ways:

- using secure emails accounts for electronic transfers;
- personally taking the records if able to;
- double packing and marking confidential (to avoid accidental opening);
- follow-up phone calls to ensure the appropriate people have received the records.

“Ensuring there were clear policies and procedures that were known to all staff and volunteers - one school gave an ‘information sharing pocket leaflet’ to all staff and volunteers.”

(Education Professional, online survey data)

10.6 The importance of leadership

Overall, the schools which were visited or those in the survey took a similar view, that leadership action has a marked effect on the importance placed on safeguarding in a school. It is through this that expectations are understood for staff, pupils and other agencies. In one of the schools visited, the proactive involvement of the head teacher at induction emphasises the importance given to safeguarding and also introduces the ‘open door’ policy that is so important in these schools. This holistic approach is indicative of mutual respect and care for their colleagues and models the safeguarding approach towards each other as well as the children in their care.

“At Induction, staff are given a:

- *1:1 session with the head teacher covering the staff code of conduct which covers a wide range of safeguarding issues*
- *1:1 session with the head teacher to go through the staff handbook, which covers more safeguarding prompts to identify any learning needs*
- *They are given a copy of the staff handbook that is relevant to their role that includes their safeguarding responsibilities.”*

Ensuring there is clear and regular communication with all these partners reinforces the ‘listening culture’ of the school and also people’s individual responsibilities around this. It is obvious that the headteacher has great responsibility as they are approached for advice by staff advice when they have any concerns about a child or queries around what information should be shared. The role of leadership and management is to establish and manage the safeguarding and child protection systems through developing an appropriate ethos and culture in the school as well as through policies and procedures, and through communication with a wide variety of stakeholders.

11. Policies and Procedures

11.1 The range of policies

All the schools that took part in this study recognised the need for clear policies and procedures. These policies are not ‘add-ons’ to what the school does but integral to its practices and procedures, which support both prevention and protection.

Respondents from the selected schools described the following policies as the most widely used in relation to safeguarding:

- Safeguarding
- Child Protection
- Anti-Bullying Policies*
- Behaviour
- E-safety
- Staff Acceptable Use Policy
- Staff/pupil code of conduct
- Attendance
- Confidentiality

*Schools are required to have a Behaviour Policy, the Anti-Bullying Policy may be integrated within this, or it may be a stand alone policy.

On school visits the research team were also shown other policies relating to safety such as Risk Assessment, Emergency Evacuation and First Aid. There was considerable discussion of data sharing and data protection matters and agreement that policy in these matters needs to be clear and understood by all. Good policies informed staff of pertinent issues and clearly outlined procedures to follow, ensuring that staff clearly understood their role within the context of the policy.

11.2 Developing procedures from common sense

Some examples of good practice could be described simply as “common sense” and they build on existing processes. Schools were keen to ensure that the best practices were captured within their policy to ensure continuity if a member of staff changed or if someone needed clarification on what to do. In some schools a rule or policy had been developed or had simply emerged in response to undertaking a risk assessment or in responding to the needs of a particular pupil or event. One such example is that of a primary school maintaining registers off site in the nearby nursery provision, so that a spare copy of the register would be available if the primary school building was ever evacuated.

11.3 Reflective and responsive policy and practice

Policies were ‘living documents’: they evolved in response to the needs of the school and the community around it. Both staff and parents mentioned policies changing in response to situations which had arisen. Schools were also aware that numerous policies can be overwhelming, and so had sought to reduce the burden by organising them cohesively.

“It was the way that school reacted to incidents and altered their policies in line with the lessons learnt from the incident.”

(Parent, village school, Midlands)

“Our Safeguarding File contains specific policies and procedures on more than 30 separate areas.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

The majority of respondents referred to a review cycle which was established when the policy was first written. These were set at annual, biannual or tri-annual periods depending upon the policy concerned, with child protection policies reviewed annually. However, these dates were amended in response to incidents or identified needs. The method of sharing these policies varied and might

be through regular staff meetings; during INSET days or using the learning platform. The high level of communication about policies was valued by staff.

There was also variation between schools as to who was involved in the process of review - these included:

- use of Local Authority audit tools and reviews.
- regular reports to governors.
- involving children in site walks.

A key feature in the schools represented here is how they relate their policies to the different roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers in the schools. This ensures that people are aware of their duties and they are supported to carry them out. In one school in the North of England the head teacher ensured that the responsibility of safeguarding and child protection was written into each person's induction pack, to the relevant level, and was discussed with them within the first few days of joining the school.

11.4 Whole school involvement

This was achieved in different ways:

- whole school training which explore policies and procedures.
- safeguarding and child protection as a standard agenda item on Governor and staff meetings.

Some schools are members of a Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB) training sub-group which helps to formulate policies and influence change.

11.5 What advice and support is there to help schools develop their policies?

Schools referred to different agencies that were able to support them in the development of policies:

Principal Officer Child Protection
(Schools & Early Years) including use of Safeguarding Health Checks

LSCB staff working with schools' Safeguarding Co-ordinator / Designated person.

An education officer with responsibility for safeguarding; use of material produced by education safeguarding group

Education Improvement Advisor
(Part Time)
Audit Tool for school available on internet and visits from EIA available
Exemplar policies available

Safeguarding in Education Officers and use of Schools Extranet website

Police youth engagement team

11.6 Best practice was evident when:

- Policies are 'living documents' – reviewed and updated in response to emerging needs and regulatory requirements. (For example the requirement for governors to approve policies annually).
- Policies were easy to understand and child and parent-friendly as appropriate.
- The whole school community or appropriate sections of the school community were consulted on the policy development or review.
- Staff are required to know and absorb the regular updates - including signing to show they have read and received these.

- Pupils have been involved in developing policies such as the Anti-Bullying Policy or a child friendly version of the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for the Information Communications Technology (ICT) policy.
- The policy clearly relates to and reflects local safeguarding and child protection procedures.

12. Training

'Training is the most important [aspect of safeguarding]. Accountability is relevant and everyone knows their responsibility.'

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

12.1 Models of training

Safeguarding should feature strongly within the recruitment process. From induction onwards there was a range of training for staff, tailored according to their experience. It is apparent that there are several different training requirements that together make up a model of best practice in training for Safeguarding. These include:

Core Training	Role Specific Training	Pupil Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction training in safeguarding and child protection for new school staff at all levels (teaching and non-teaching) • Top up school sessions for all staff, including non teaching staff • On-going child protection training • Internet and e-safety training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly appointed designated person training in child protection • Designated person update workshops • Interagency training • School leaders training • Governors' training • Safe recruitment training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for pupils involved in a peer listening/support scheme

12.2 Good practice

Respondents highlighted good practice in the training provided as:

- **Responsive:** Among schools rated 'outstanding' for safeguarding by Ofsted, responsiveness is striking. They describe adapting to their local circumstances, to individual cases and remaining flexible to the needs of the children in their care. They were reflective in their training programmes, focusing on areas they felt were timely or required for review.
- **Across the whole community:** The training described by 'outstanding' schools was notable for including the entire school community, all staff - teaching and non-teaching - governors, parents, volunteers and pupils. It also extends, if appropriate, to the after school club.

'All support, admin, caretaking, MTS are included [in training] as well as teaching staff.'

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

'Safeguarding for volunteers has improved due to the numbers of them and how this is monitored and evaluated.'

(Head teacher, primary school, North of England)

- **Pupils trained to support others:** Staff described pupil involvement in schemes such as: Rainbow Rangers, Peer Support (KS2); Peer Mentors; Playground Pals; Problem Pals (KS2) and Friendship Squads or Buddies. They also listed the school council as having a role in safeguarding.

12.3 Staff training at Induction

There are three 'building blocks' of training described at induction. These are:

1. PRINTED MATERIALS

Printed materials and introductory sessions explaining procedures were provided before staff begin work with children. These are given by people such as the Designated Senior Person (DSP) or deputy head. One school provided a quick reference card to staff detailing procedures and referral routes.

Examples of printed materials mentioned by staff:

- *Induction booklet covering some safeguarding issues*
- *Staff Handbook outlining relevant procedures and who the designated teachers are*
- *Staff Code of Conduct detailing specific areas of safeguarding*
- *Safeguarding and safer recruitment guides for governors*
- *Child Protection policy and procedures given to all staff, volunteers & governors*

2. TRAINING

Formal training is also provided and repeated later at regular intervals. Staff frequently mentioned that they are asked to sign to acknowledge they have received and read policies such as Child Protection; Health and Safety, Safer Working Practices for Adults working with Children, Anti-Bullying and Acceptable Use Policy for ICT. In one school this was done on an annual basis.

Training at induction:

- *Basic introduction to child protection (provided by Local Authority or voluntary agencies such as NSPCC)*
- *Longer child protection course e.g. 2 day child protection training from the local authority*
- *Safer Recruitment training from the local authority.*

3. ONE-TO-ONE DISCUSSIONS

Training can take various forms – in-house by a head teacher or designated child protection person, via the local authority or online.

Informal discussions mentioned by staff:

- *Discussions about disclosure, what to write and who to report to (for new staff and volunteers)*
- *Regular discussion of child protection policy (by head teacher)*
- *Discussions about general concerns and who to report them to*

12.4 Training for ongoing professional development.

This included training from local authorities and other agencies, accessed by Designated Senior Persons (DSP) and cascaded to other school staff on a regular basis. Again, training resources fell into three categories:

(1) PRINTED MATERIALS

Respondents referred to regular chances to revisit their child protection policies and procedures. They were able to raise issues and discuss if their policies addressed the concerns they had experienced. They valued the opportunity to clarify who to refer issues to and have the relevant contact details included on the policy.

“There is a section in our staff handbook on safeguarding- this is reissued to all staff at the start of each academic year.”

(Head teacher, Outstanding school staff survey data)

Printed materials mentioned by staff:

- *Child Protection and Safeguarding policies reviewed every September*
- *Policies reviewed in response to specific issues and bulletins sent to all staff if major changes made*
- *Staff handbook*
- *All staff read guidance (such as ‘Safer Working Practices for Adults working with Young People, 2007) and sign to acknowledge they have*

(2) TRAINING

Training may be provided by Local Children’s Safeguarding Boards,(LSCB)s, SENCOS, Local Authority Designated Officers) (LADO) or specialist voluntary sector agencies. Child Protection was the training which was most frequently mentioned, together with Safeguarding and First Aid. Domestic Abuse training was also listed by some. This was discussed in detail in one of the schools we visited as they had accessed additional training in response to a need staff had identified (due to attendance of children from the local refuge). Hence the training provided was timely and responsive to the needs of the staff group and children.

Training cascaded

- Child Protection officer attends training annually and cascades to staff. They keep a list of those who attend and follow up with staff who did not
- Designated Senior Person (DSP) with DSP level 3 training, or SENCO cascades regular child protection updates to staff (including after school club)
- Training is identified through ongoing issues (e.g. allegations against staff) and the member of staff who attends then cascades this to the whole staff group
- Premises staff, extended services staff and mid-day supervisors are given a short up date every three years

Training provided by an external agency

- DSP accessed Optimus Child Protection Update for updates on Legislation
- Child Protection and First Aid training for all staff on a rolling programme (every three years, every two years or annually according to their role)
- Local authority provided dedicated Child Protection sessions for DSP . (Schools referred to sending more than one member of staff to DSP training, when possible)
- Training accessed from relevant agencies during INSET days (if a need is identified regarding specific pupils)
- LSCB provide regular updates on training such as on Domestic Abuse
- Observations at other schools

(3) INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS

Regular staff meetings that began with an agenda item on safeguarding, appeared to be a helpful addition to the training programme. Staff valued the opportunity to discuss concerns they had about specific children or their training needs in order to support children.

Discussions mentioned by staff:

- *Child Protection policy updates regularly shared with whole school*
- *Staff meetings on safeguarding and child protection*
- *Regular updates on changes*
- *Concerns about particular children raised and discussed within confidentiality boundaries*
- *Child Protection standing item on staff meeting agenda*



Figure 4: Building Blocks of Training for Effective Safeguarding

12.5 Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The majority of staff respondents were not trained to complete a CAF, because this task fell to the Designated Person. However, one school described how everyone used the CAF 'Cause for Concern' forms across their school, no matter how small the concern might be. Whilst the use of CAF was inconsistent in the study schools, respondents repeatedly described a 'no thresholds' approach and were clear that they are urged to report even the smallest concern. They also explained that these reports are taken seriously, regardless of the systems they used to record them.

"CAF is embedded in the school system. Staff use CAF forms to log concerns and pass to DSP."

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

"There are no thresholds as such, any level of concern can be logged."

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

12.6 Training in serious incident procedures.

Almost two thirds of respondents among staff in the selected schools said that the training they had received included procedures to follow for serious incidents. However the remaining staff said they did not receive training of this sort and it would seem that this could be improved. With the possibilities of internet incidents, for instance, where action to preserve evidence is needed at the first report, and the fact that other types of serious incidents could occur when any member of staff is present, staff need to know what they should do in such a case. However, 100% of respondents said they knew what to do if a child disclosed an issue to them.

"There is a critical incident plan that is annually updated that supports this."

(Head teacher, village school, Midlands)

12.7 Evaluating the training for safeguarding and child protection.

Practice needs to be evaluated and so does training if it is to be effective. Our data provided little evidence of systematic evaluation that focused on training, although safeguarding in general was monitored and evaluated.

12.8 Barriers to schools' access to training

Whilst training may be available our respondents referred to a number of barriers which prevented them from accessing it:

- Dedicated time (and funding) to be released to attend.
- Lack of information about the training available.
- LSCB training strategy being under review so limited training available.
- Some schools were unaware of training needs until there was an incident.
- Frequency of the training and its timing in relation to the school year.

However, where schools had overcome these barriers, good practice was evident in planning and structuring training:

"Regular updates for designated staff –staff keep a record of their training. ALL school based staff receive annual reminders of procedures and practice – governors receive at least annual reports of training delivered. Appropriate governors are trained."

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“Dedicated Training and Development Officer to monitor and deliver safeguarding training to all schools to ensure 3 yearly coverage for all staff.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“e-Safety is now specifically offered to designated persons to emphasise the point that it is part of safeguarding rather than ICT.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“Some schools keep incident logs of e-Safety concerns which can then be used to inform policies, practice and training.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“Networks share information about training. A cluster of schools had shared the costs of training from a voluntary agency.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

“Regular meetings allow staff to identify training needs quickly and respond as soon as possible.”

(Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

13. Reflective Practice



Figure 5: Reflective Practice Cycle

One of the important features of the schools in this study is the time they spend in reflecting on their safeguarding and early intervention practice. Reflection and adaptability to their pupils and the community leads these schools to be seen as 'outstanding'. All the members of staff are striving to improve their practice and to make their settings safer for children.

13.1 Continuing professional development

Study schools illustrated their investment in making sure their knowledge and practice is meets the needs of the children with whom they are working through their commitment to ongoing learning. Training needs were often identified through particular cases in the school and the issues which were faced. Examples included:

Legislation	<i>'Responsive to legislation e.g. equality policy was reviewed.'</i> (Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)
Site security	<i>'A boy managed to get over the school fence and leave the school grounds. As a result we built higher fence and reviewed our health and safety policy. The visitor policy was reviewed, any visitors should be asked for I.D by reception.'</i> (Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)
Accidents	<i>'In the playground children kept coming in with injuries but it wasn't clear what was happening so now they must come in with a member of staff so that we know what has happened'</i> (Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)
Anti-bullying work	<i>'The anti-bullying policy is child friendly to help identify problems and use it with children to resolve issues.' 'Regular updating of the child version of our bullying policy'</i> (Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)
Bereavement	<i>'Recently there have been a few bereavements. Information and guidance is given to anyone working closely with the child. Support is offered for people working with a child who has had a loss. There is also a helpline for employee wellbeing. There are good relationships with colleagues and an open door policy.'</i> (Member of staff, city school, North of England)
Confidentiality	<i>'Confidentiality came up at a staff meeting so it was raised in the following INSET and policy altered'</i> (Member of staff, central London school)
Professional development	<i>'We have extended the team to include a social worker.'</i> (Staff Survey, Outstanding schools survey data)

The good communication systems in place enabled staff to report any concerns, raise good practice and share their learning. This responsive way of working ensures that the school is learning all the time and making its practice is as good as it can be. This can only be achieved if the time and commitment is taken to fully examine any individual cases and evaluate how successfully they have been addressed.

13.2 Policy Review

Review of policies was not limited by the set timescales; rather, policies were reviewed in response to specific cases which highlighted the need for change.

'There is a dynamic approach to updating polices... tweaked to respond to need and updated if an issue has occurred or there is room for improvement'
Response from an External Partner on good safeguarding practices in a particular school

13.3 Governor Involvement

One school noticed that they had an increasing number of looked after children on their roll. After discussing the support needed for this group the school identified both an 'in school' approach with staff and a broader one, involving governors. In order to improve accountability, the school identified one of the school governors to take a lead role in respect of these children, as well as having a nominated governor for child protection.

13.4 Collating evidence of need:

Another school provided an example of identifying support needs for children in the school in order better to target and locate support:

A proactive approach from the board of governors was seen in another school where they had asked the head teacher to plot the cases that do not meet the threshold of social care but were causing concern. They then wanted to look for patterns to ensure that resources were in the right place to support the children and their families. Many respondents in our sample were using different methods to do this so that they could identify vulnerable groups and monitor the impact of interventions on the welfare of the child, as well as their academic achievement.

13.5 Annual pupil questionnaires reveal areas for action

Schools are teaching staying safe messages on a variety of different topics and the study schools are very conscientious in making sure those messages are heard. Schools would ask their pupils to take a questionnaire annually which included safeguarding questions. Unexpected results in one school led to work being implemented to address the issues raised in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were used to inform the school about gaps in knowledge or about particular issues so the school could respond.

13.6 Working across all themes creates excellence

A school needs to achieve 'outstanding' levels in all the themes mentioned in this report for them to be a fully outstanding school. To do less would not be enough to ensure the pupils are safeguarded appropriately and that the school continues to adapt to its intake and community.

The schools participating in this study have evolved their safeguarding practice in response to the drastic change in the support services that they may have received in the past. Together with the impact of higher thresholds from social care departments, this change has meant that schools have had to become more innovative in their approach as they experience the demands on them to handle increasingly complex cases. Reflective practice has assisted this and it takes commitment. All of the schools involved in this study have shown evidence of this and a school hoping to achieve excellence in their own safeguarding practice would need to develop this approach.

14. Key Findings

This report has highlighted what is already being done to achieve outstanding safeguarding practice in some primary schools so that it that can be emulated by others.

The overarching themes described here are interdependent. Excellent practice cannot be achieved if one or two are omitted – this would weaken not only the whole strategy, but each of the remaining themes.

The key findings are:

- The dynamic leadership style of the head teacher and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) led the whole school community in a committed and responsive approach to act in unity on safeguarding.
- Reflective practice and adaptability allowed schools to be responsive and flexible. Cases were often used to shape policy and thoughtful leaders adapted to changes in their environment.
- There was good access to the senior leadership team - although the head teacher often had lead responsibility (as Designated Senior Person with responsibility for child protection) the senior leadership team members supported this role and were available to support others.
- There was shared responsibility for safeguarding - every person was aware of their role and responsibility for safeguarding.
- Staff were seen as approachable by children and parents/carers.
- There was a range of support strategies to meet the individual needs and circumstances of children identified as being vulnerable.
- Priority was given to developing relationships with external agencies - this was illustrated by the allocation of resources, such as special educational needs co-ordinator time, family support workers or learning mentors. Systems for passing on concerns about risk would thereby be robust.
- Thresholds for raising concerns were minimal.
- Schools proactively used all concerns to target early intervention work.
- All concerns were recorded and a consistent system used – for example concern logs or ‘niggle notes’. This enabled an overall picture of each case to be assembled.
- Effective monitoring of the records informed the training programmes for staff. The leadership team ensured relevant training was accessed to address the identified needs of both their children and staff. This was in addition to the rolling programme of child protection and safeguarding training. Staff were also provided with regular updates and given the opportunity to participate in policy reviews in light of the training they had received.
- Staff felt well supported in their safeguarding role and in turn felt able to provide a high degree of support to children.
- Empowering messages of support for both staff and children were displayed around the school.
- Transition strategies were in place for vulnerable children entering and transferring from the school.

15. Conclusions from the study

- Schools would value guidelines and case studies on identifying and developing a range of support strategies for children, particularly those recognised as 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' of abuse and neglect.
- In relation to the above, advice and training should be provided on the development of nurture groups to address different social and emotional needs.
- Schools valued support strategies, such as peer support systems, that gave pupils roles in supporting their peers. Guidelines and case studies would be valuable in assisting to identify and advise on safe and effective strategies for engaging pupils. The availability of information on child protection and programmes on staying safe for pupils continues to be important. Schools reported the loss of services to train and support peer supporters and, hence, advice should be included on the development of peer support networks with signposts to national and local organisations offering these services.
- For there to be effective early intervention, resources need to be dedicated to enable school staff to liaise with other agencies (such as social care, CAMHS, FIP) and to attend child protection/ safeguarding or other appropriate meetings. This could be achieved through providing time off timetable for staff members such as the SENCO or Learning Mentor. Wherever possible, schools should identify a dedicated space to host multi-agency meetings that can be held without interruption.
- In relation to the above, schools should continue to support relationships established through the former 'Safer Schools Partnerships'.
- Further research could helpfully be undertaken to identify the successful systems used to log and monitor concerns and the reasons for the inconsistent use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to achieve this.
- Advice and guidance should be provided to develop rigorous information sharing systems, with attention to the additional needs at times of transition.
- Advice and training is needed for senior managers on how to support the designated person (s), key staff and all staff in their safeguarding duties.
- School leadership need to ensure training and dedicated time for staff to meet their responsibilities, to be able to reflect upon their safeguarding policies and practices and to continue learning about issues of abuse and neglect.
- School leaders should engage with their local schools/ education representatives on the LSCB on the development of local policy and procedures following the publication of the new Working Together guidance in 2012. This should include greater consistency in the use of common assessment approaches to multi-agency working with families in need and thresholds for interventions.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Abbreviations

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AUP	Acceptable Use Policy
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CEOP	The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
CP	Child protection
DfE	Department for Education
DSP	Designated Senior Person
EIA	Education Improvement Advisor
EPIC	Former EIP (Education Improvement Partnership)
EVAW	End Violence against Women
FAST	Family and Adolescent Support Team/ Family Action Support Team/ Family Assessment Support Team
FIP	Family Intervention Project
HT	Headteacher
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked after child
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children's Board
MALT	Multi-Agency Locality Teams
MTS	Meal Time Supervisors
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PSHE	Personal Social Health & Economic education
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PTFA	Parent Teacher and Friends Association
RE	Religious Education
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEF	Self Evaluation Form
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.
SIE Officers	Safeguarding in Education Officer
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TA	Teaching Assistant
TAC	Team Around the Child
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools (now the Teaching Agency)

Appendix 2 - Glossary of terms

Acceptable Use Policy

A set of rules applied by the owner/manager of a network, website or computer system to ensure safe and secure use.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Provide advice and support for those with alcohol issues

Annual Compliance checklist

The school compliance checklist is an online tool that enables schools to self-assess and monitor compliance with all relevant legislation and Departmental requirements such as facilities and financial management, governance and pupil engagement and wellbeing.

Byron

Refers to Professor Tanya Byron, author of *Safer children in a digital world* the 2008 Byron review *Byron Review* and *Do we have safer children in a digital world?: a review of progress since the 2008 Byron Review*.

Behaviour Support

Pupils referred to the Behaviour Support Service can have a range of behaviour problems resulting in disruption and aggression or sometimes withdrawn behaviour. Behaviour Support works with schools to help young people solve these problems.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Services which address the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people.

Child Protection

As defined in *Working Together 2010* Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, harm.

Children's Centre

Children's Centres offer all families with children under five a range of services, information and support in their local community

Circle Time/ talk time/ listening system

Circle Time provides an opportunity for teachers to explore any issues of concern. It also allows children to address and discuss issues which might be worrying them, and as part of a group think of practical ways to solve problems.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The Common Assessment is a shared assessment tool for use across all Children's Services and all Local Areas in England, based on the Assessment Framework document and guidance. It aims to help early identification of need and promote co-ordinated service provision.

Department for Education (DfE)

UK government department with responsibility for infant, primary and secondary education.

Designated Senior Person (DSP)

The role of the DSP is to take lead responsibility for managing child protection issues and cases. This involves providing advice and support to other staff, making referrals to and liaising with the local authority and working with other agencies.

Drama therapy

Drama therapy uses drama exercises and techniques to achieve therapeutic outcomes i.e. improvisation, storytelling, role play, puppetry and character building

Early intervention

Early intervention is the process of taking timely action at the point of which it is felt that a family, child or young person is in need of help or assistance with the intention of preventing the problem from escalating.

Education Improvement Advisor (EIA)

Ordinarily this role is fulfilled by experienced senior leader with a school background i.e. a former head teacher or senior local authority officer. The EIA works with schools to review and identify priorities, work of school improvement plans and observe lessons.

Educational Psychologist

Educational Psychologists help children and young people who are experiencing problems within an educational setting with the aim of enhancing their learning.

End Violence against Women (EVAW)

A national coalition of individuals and organisations calling on government, public bodies and others to take concerted action to end violence against women

Epic Partners

Formerly EIP (Education Improvement Partnership). Epic Partners is a charitable company and provides the schools with a legal and financial framework to grow its innovative partnership working.

E Safety

E-safety involves promoting and implementing the safe use of electronic equipment and communications.

Ethos

The philosophy and guiding beliefs of a school. (Such as creating a safe environment and sense of community.)

Family Intervention Project

Family Intervention Projects offer intensive support to families in order to tackle anti-social behaviour, child poverty and youth crime.

Governing bodies

Governing bodies are comprised of volunteer school governors from the local community who are responsible for providing strategic direction, determining budgets, appointing and dismissing staff and reviewing school policies.

Information sharing

The sharing of information between agencies and professionals in the best interests of the child. Effective local arrangements should be in place to ensure all agencies understand their responsibilities and the limits of confidentiality.

Independent schools

An Independent school is a school that is independent in its finances and governance from national and local government.

INSET days

Every year schools are allocated five days for in-service training to use at their discretion for staff development purposes.

Junior Citizenship Scheme

The Junior Citizen Scheme is an initiative aimed at giving young children the skills to deal with a wide range of emergency situations and to enable them to make a valued contribution to their local community through good citizenship.

Learning mentor

Learning Mentors work with pupils to help them overcome barriers to learning through one to one or small group work.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

Local Safeguarding Children Boards are statutory bodies which aim to ensure the effectiveness of work done by local agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people their locality. Members consist of representative from agencies which include statutory, community, voluntary and faith organisations

Looked After Child (LAC)

Looked after children (LAC) are those aged between 0 to 18 years who cannot safely remain with

their family and are cared for by the local authority, either on a court order or by agreement with their parent/s.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The LADO works within Children's Services and must be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child.

Maintained Schools

Maintained schools are funded by central government via the local authority, and do not charge fees to students.

Multi-Agency Locality Teams (MALT)

Multi agency teams of professionals from a range of professions across the 0-19 age. They meet regularly and will review specific vulnerable children and young people's cases.

Multi-disciplinary teams

In education, the multidisciplinary team is a group made up of several specialists who assess children's difficulties. The team may include a paediatrician, an educational psychologist, a speech and language therapist, an occupational therapist, a social worker and other relevant professionals.

Munro

Refers to Professor Eileen Munro's Review of Child Protection, published in 2011; A report that contains recommendations on improvements to the child protection system.

Nurture Group

Nurture groups consist of approximately 10 children with at least two trained supervising, adults. They are intended to provide a safe, structured and secure environment for children to work through social/ emotional and behavioural issues.

Occupational therapy

An holistic health care profession. Occupational therapists use treatments to develop, recover, or maintain the daily living and work skills of their patients with a physical, mental or developmental condition.

Parent Support Adviser

Parent Support Advisers assist schools in tackling under-achievement by working with parents and their families to enable vulnerable pupils to overcome barriers to their learning.

Parent Teacher and Friends Association

The aim of Parent Teacher and Friends Associations is to foster better relationships between parents and their children's schools.

Pastoral Support

Pastoral care is a means of academic and personal support offered to children and young people by the school and its staff.

Personal Social & Health Education (PSHE)

A planned programme to help children develop fully as individuals and as members of families and social and economic communities. Its goal is to equip young people with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practical skills to live healthily, safely, productively and responsibly.

Peer Support

Peer support is a means for children and young people of similar ages to seek and offer advice and support to one another. Young people who offer peer support are not counsellors but should be offered some form of training to undertake this role.

Play service

Can provide school based activities such as breakfast clubs, after school clubs, holiday play schemes and community-based activity programmes for children

Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)

Police Community Support Officer PCSOs are civilian members of police staff who have been

trained to engage with their local community, and work towards reassuring the public and deterring anti-social behaviour.

Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

A centre for children who are not able to attend a mainstream or special school due to exclusion.

Reflective practice:

This term is used to describe a school that regularly re-evaluates its approach and adapts to cases or new concerns in the environment of the school, based on their experience of implementing the safeguarding policy and strategy. This flexibility also provided the means to be responsive to particular children's needs.

Risk assessments

A risk assessment is a means of examining potential harm within a specific environment and in order to put in place practical measure to prevent them.

Safeguarding

As defined In Working Together 2010 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development and ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

Safeguarding in Education Officer

Provide advice, guidance and training on aspects of Safeguarding and Child Protection as to schools.

Safer Schools Partnerships

The Safer School Partnerships enable local agencies to address significant behavioural and crime-related issues in and around the community of the school.

Self Evaluation Form (SEF)

A tool for schools to measure their progress and use to inform their school improvement plan. (No longer a mandatory requirement by Ofsted.)

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Usually consists of the Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, Assistant Deputy Heads and Bursar.

Serious Case Review

Serious Case Reviews take place when a child has died or has experienced significant harm as a result of serious abuse. They are also carried out if a child's parent has been a victim of homicide. They provide the opportunity to identify and reflect on lessons to be learned in order to improve inter-agency working.

Service Level Agreement

A document which sets out the agreement reached between buyer and provider as to the services to be provided i.e. costs, quality standards and performance/review measures.

Serious incidents

A serious incident is an event which causes disruption to the school and creates significant danger or risk that could traumatically affect individuals within the school.

Significant harm

Introduced in the Children Act 1989, as the threshold (whether 'risk' or 'actual' harm) that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Education Act 1996 defines a pupil as having a special educational need if he or she has 'a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him'.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)

The SENCo is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy.

Specialist teachers

Teachers who have specialisms in particular subjects i.e. English and Maths.

Speech & language therapist

The role of a speech and language therapist is to assess and treat speech, language and communication problems in people of all ages to enable them to communicate to the best of their ability.

Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

As defined by the DfE, SEAL is “a comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

Teaching Assistants take on tasks that allow the teacher to concentrate on teaching and provide support pupils with particular individual needs either one-to-one, or in small groups.

Team around the Child (TAC)

Team Around the Child is a model of service provision in which a range of different practitioners come together to help and support an individual child.

Team Around the School (TAS)

This group of professionals come together once a term and are in contact throughout the term in order to deliver and advise on the therapy needs of our children.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) works across the UK tackling child sex abuse and providing advice for parents, young people and professionals.

The Marlborough Family Group

The Marlborough Family Service offers a range of out-patient services for children, adolescents, adults, couples and families with personal or behavioural problems.

Thresholds

Generally used to refer to point at which a child’s case is seen as needing assessment by children’s social care. In this sense thresholds can vary, are based on professional judgment and may be perceived differently by partners in the safeguarding network. However, the term can relate to the point of recognition and action (as it is in this report on schools’ reference to their own thresholds), referral to or acceptance of referral by children’s social care about need or risk of harm to a child.

Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)

Now the Teaching Agency hosted on DfE website.

Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS)

A system to check the suitability of prospective employees and volunteers who wish to work with children. The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) manages this process. Criminal Records Bureau checks are linked. Following the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, in December 2012 the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) will merge into the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This new organisation will provide a joined up, seamless service to combine the criminal records and barring functions.

Womankind

A charity that is dedicated to raising the status of women via direct involvement in the community.

Young Carer's Programme

Provides support to young people who may be looking after a parent or carer who has an illness, disability or drug/alcohol problem.

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