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Mr R Watson  
Headteacher  
Stratton Upper School and Community  
College  
Eagle Farm Road  
Biggleswade  
Bedfordshire  
SG18 8JB

Dear Mr Watson

### **Ofsted 2010–11 best practice survey: safeguarding in schools**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 6 October 2010 to look at work in safeguarding.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in safeguarding in schools. The publication will include case studies about individual schools. If Stratton Upper School and Community College is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

### **Features of good practice observed**

- The safety and well-being of students take high priority in the aims set by the school so that safeguarding of students is always considered and linked coherently into policies, procedures and plans.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the safeguarding needs of students in the communities served by the school in Biggleswade town and the surrounding rural areas. The school is driven by an ethos of inclusion which has shaped the provision of varied safe environments within the school for students with diverse needs and abilities to keep up their learning and development.

- Students of all ages feel safe in the school and behave responsibly towards each other. Students say that building good relationships and being friendly keeps them safe from bullying and harassment. Students spoken to throughout the visit echoed the words of one sixth former who summed up by saying, 'It's a friendly place.'
- Staff build very good relationships with students. The wide range of support available in classes, through breaks and in extended provision, means that adults are always working closely with students and give guidance on all aspects of students' development and well-being.
- The school manages security well on its large and unusual site. Staff and students are reassured by having good contact with senior managers who work 'on call' with radio telephones around the whole premises.
- The safeguarding expertise of staff in pastoral care and learning support is extensive. Procedures for discussing and referring concerns are well planned and well understood across the whole school. Staff and students know who they can turn to in difficult situations and when they have concerns about well-being.
- In addition to support in classes the school provides a Retreat area for vulnerable students, a Remove for those at risk of exclusion and also a community farm. This range of provision promotes positive attitudes to being in school and enables some of the most vulnerable students to carry on attending in a safe and secure environment.
- Management roles are established clearly for child protection, health and safety, inclusion and risk assessment. Safe vetting and recruitment procedures are in place and thorough induction of staff ensures that all can play their part in a safe environment from the start.
- Risk assessment procedures are effective and make great use of a countywide electronic database and communication system to ensure that the environment and visits are as safe as they can be.
- Comprehensive policies and procedures that meet legal requirements and local/national guidance are in place. Policies are systematically reviewed by energetic and knowledgeable staff, demonstrating that the school learns from its own inspections, audits and reviews and those of others. Leaders and managers continually monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and listen to the views of students and their parents/carers.
- Partnership working is extensive and vital to the outstanding safeguarding impact of the setting. Communication with other professionals or agencies already working with the students is continual to ensure no loopholes and no duplications. The setting participates fully in core group meetings and

reviews and will host the meetings if other parties agree. Partners communicate regularly with safeguarding managers at the school to ensure that senior leaders and managers are well informed about needs in the area. From this the school plans relevant sessions in the curriculum and extended activities, for example to combat a localised rise in underage drinking of alcohol.

- The setting works directly with parents/carers to ensure good attendance of the students. The setting seeks feedback from parents/carers which shows that parents/carers overwhelmingly feel that their children are safe in the school

### **Points discussed for development**

To promote the contribution that older, sixth form students can make, the school will implement its plans to:

- review the sixth form prospectus with the older students to clarify that those in Years 12 and 13, although not necessarily adults, are all responsible role models
- re-start the Year 12/13 mentoring and buddying schemes for older students to work with the younger ones.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Stratton and the opportunity to explore with you the school's outstanding practice in safeguarding. I am extremely grateful to the senior leadership team for providing me with such a full and informative programme for the visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, leaders and partners from other organisations who took the time to meet with me. I was impressed with the caring and friendly attitude of all students and their respect for each other. Please thank them for their helpful contribution to this survey and give them my very best wishes as they move on in their careers.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop safeguarding in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Christine Davies**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**