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25 May 2010

Mrs A Starr
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Starr

Ofsted 2010-11 good practice survey: safeguarding in schools

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 11 May 2010 to look at work in safeguarding.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about good practice in safeguarding in schools. The publication will include case studies about individual schools. If Vale of Evesham School is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment before publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

Features of good practice

- The school's strong commitment to safeguarding is shared by staff, pupils, governors and other agencies and is very clear in everyday practice. This includes seamless practice at all levels with respect to integrated education and care.
- The Head and other senior managers have established a staffing structure which brings together expertise from a range of professions and is very effective in promoting safeguarding throughout the school. Responsibilities for different aspects of safeguarding are very clear. All staff know what is expected of them and how their work contributes to safeguarding. There are full-time posts, such as pastoral support centre staff, a speech and language therapist, a senior technician with responsibility for e-safety and administrators, who all play a significant role in promoting safeguarding. Arrangements for vetting staff, volunteers and contractors are thorough and in line with the good guidance provided by the local authority.
- There is a strong focus on regular and relevant staff training and building expertise to meet the complex range of needs. This has a positive impact on promoting a safe environment for staff and pupils. For example, it is helpful in understanding the causes of challenging behaviour and the strategies used to help pupils to communicate effectively and manage

their behaviour, so reducing risk to themselves and others. Close monitoring by senior managers ensures that key training, for example in child protection and the use of positive physical intervention, is kept up to date.

- Communication between staff is very good and ensures that they have detailed, up-to-date knowledge about individual pupils and their needs. The use of the shared server by all staff is very efficient and effective in ensuring that they have ready access to information, such as individual care and education plans, risk assessments, targets, records of incidents and contacts with parents and carers. Close monitoring by senior managers results in changes to provision where appropriate. This, combined with joint training and working practices, also promotes continuity and consistency across care and education.
- Volunteers, of whom there are about 20 at any one time, are fully briefed on child protection issues. The leaflet for volunteers about child protection is an example of good practice which has been adopted by the local authority for sharing with other schools. Volunteers are invited to attend weekly staff meetings and to participate in training.
- The school is particularly good at minimising the barriers to participation. Pupils have many opportunities to engage in activities on and off site, including residential visits. The school goes to great lengths to enable this to happen, taking appropriate measures to reduce risk to those involved. Arrangements for risk assessments are extremely thorough. A particular strength is the school's flexibility in adapting activities to suit pupils' individual needs and circumstances.
- A further strength is partnership working with other schools and external agencies. The school is positive, proactive and receptive; it seeks and acts on advice for the benefit and welfare of its pupils. Other professionals speak about how easy it is to work with staff at the school because they are very open and transparent.
- The pupils say they feel safe at school. School council members speak confidently and knowledgeably about safeguarding arrangements both in school and in the wider community. They are well aware of the steps taken to keep them safe and understand why these are needed. They know about risk assessments and who conducts them. They understand the need to be careful when using equipment, for example in design technology. In information and communication technology, policies are clear about the use of equipment and the internet and pupils willingly sign individual contracts knowing that these are intended to keep them safe. They show a mature understanding and tolerance of other pupils' differences and difficulties and, during this inspection visit, shared their concerns about the lack of space on the playing field when older and younger pupils are on break at the same time.
- The school is particularly good at engaging pupils in discussions and decision-making involving their own lives at school and encouraging them to take responsibility. They are trusted to act appropriately, for example in the dining room, and respond positively. The pastoral support centre offers support to individual pupils in managing their own behaviour,

particularly in calming down and reducing their anger or anxiety so that they are able to return to the classroom ready to reengage with learning. Over time, this has had a significant impact on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. The pupils understand the code of conduct and the consequences if they cross the 'bottom line'. There is a handbook of information for pupils who are residents and the school may wish to consider providing a similar handbook for day pupils.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next school inspection.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Broomhead
Her Majesty's Inspector