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Part A: About the review

Purpose of the review

- The purpose of this check is to review Larwood Primary School's safeguarding arrangements. Its findings are based on the snapshot of evidence reviewed during the check. It is not a substitute for leaders' (including trustees') own robust, regular and systematic checks of provision and its impact.
- This review took place on 9th January 2024. The review was carried out by Fiona Tobin, a School Effectiveness Adviser from HFL Education.
- The review was carried out at the request of the school to explore the culture of safeguarding. It was not the intention of the visit to establish whether safeguarding is effective or otherwise, but to sample the culture of safeguarding through a range of activities listed below.
- This review is informed by the contents of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023' (DfE). [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115690/Keeping-Children-Safe-in-Education-September-2023.pdf)

Context

- Larwood is a primary special school setting with approximately 101 children on roll. It is situated in Stevenage. The school was inspected by Ofsted on the 9th November 2022. Ofsted judged the school GOOD, and that the safeguarding arrangements were found to be effective.

Information about the review

- During the review, meetings were held with senior leaders, governors, safeguarding leaders, staff and students at both settings.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including various policies relating to safeguarding.

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Part B: Findings of the review

1. *Environment*

- The school is set in a block with secure fencing on a residential road in the town of Stevenage. The doors are fobbed and this system was operating as intended.
- Signage directs visitors to the main entrance and reception for the school. There is a secure fence around the school.
- Visitors are asked to sign-in at reception. They are asked to produce ID to confirm who they are.
- Visitors are issued with a visitor badge which has details of the Safeguarding Team on the rear of the badge. There are different lanyards for different categories of visitor.
- During a climate walk the school was observed to be calm and purposeful; relationships between students and staff were warm and respectful.
- All students spoken to were polite and confident. The students noted the colour of the visitor's lanyard. They confirmed that the lanyard the visitor was wearing meant it was safe to talk to the visitor.
- Leaders have actioned recommendations regarding incremental improvements to the environment since the last safeguarding review.

2. *Safeguarding Team*

- The DSL is experienced in her Safeguarding role and is also the Head of School. She is a non-teaching member of staff.
- Membership of the safeguarding team has been carefully selected based on current roles and responsibilities. This has increased the capacity of the team. Some members of staff reported that the increased capacity has further enhanced the effectiveness of the team.
- The DSL is supported by the MH and SEN lead who has significant social work experience, as well as the Executive Headteacher. Three new members have joined the team since the last review. Two of these are Family Support Workers and there is also the AST responsible for Behaviour and Attendance who leads the Alternative Meaningful Opportunities (AMO) provision.
- The AMO is leaders' response to children in KS2 who are at risk of going missing in education and also serves some students from the Trust's secondary setting.
- All members of the team have a reduced or no teaching timetable.
- Two of the DSLs have completed lead DSL training. Most other members of the team have certificates which reflect enhanced training in the past 2 years. One

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member of the team recognised that they had to rebook the Safeguarding training.

- The team meets weekly, on a Monday, to review concerns raised over the weekend and plan for the week ahead. An overview of CPOMs is carried out at this meeting. This meeting involves reviewing how concerns are logged, who is logging concerns and how responses are managed. This enables the team to have a robust view of how well the safeguarding protocols are being enacted.
- Leaders are also seeking to expand their use of CPOMs to include the CPOMs engage function which will enable the local authority to also be able to see CPOMS records at the school.
- Leaders note that 7 – 10 safeguarding concerns are received per day. Staff are encouraged to log concerns but if the matter is more serious they are told to speak to the DSL.
- Currently there are 7 children on a CiN plan, 4 students on a CP plan and 2 students who are CLA.
- There is a separate meeting to discuss Children Causing Concern (Triple C) which involves all members of SLT and the Safeguarding and Behaviour teams and this process enables leaders to ensure that all factors are considered.

3. Concerns regarding staff

- School leaders are aware of the procedures and protocols around reporting allegations against staff to the LADO.
- All referrals are considered on a case-by-case basis and leaders report that they err on the side of caution and regularly call the LADO for advice.

4. Training

- All staff have received level 1 Safeguarding training. The DSL also provides annual refresher training in September of each year. This addresses any changes in KCSiE and ensures staff are reminded of school systems and procedures for reporting.
- The school uses CPOMS for reporting and recording concerns. The DSL ensures that staff are trained in the use of CPOMS and are confident in recording concerns.
- Staff that are new to the school receive a Safeguarding induction session which is an online programme delivered by The Key. This is also provided for staff that join mid-year.
- Leaders report a variety of training methods including a scenario-based approach, and a drip-feed approach in Tuesday training sessions. Staff talk positively about the training that they have received.
- Leaders report they take a 'trust but verify' approach. Staff misconceptions are picked up in the assessment quiz, and topics are revisited over time to ensure that knowledge remains up to date.

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- Leaders report that training records, including date and attendance, are maintained by the Head of School. Staff who miss the Tuesday training sessions are expected to make up the missed session with the trainer.
- Leaders report that all staff have received training on filtering and monitoring. They note that the more stringent requirements under KCSiE 2023 have not made a significant difference to their practice which was already compliant with the new guidance.

5. Governance

- There is a named trustee for Safeguarding and compliance. This trustee has significant school improvement experience and was previously a Headteacher. This trustee will be training another trustee who will take over the safeguarding role at the end of this academic year.
- The lead trustee for Safeguarding reported doing an audit across both sites in the autumn term. She has made suggestions for improving the reporting of Safeguarding to trustees around more detailed data such as number of children on CP plans to be shared with trustees.
- The lead trustee for Safeguarding and compliance reports that she has created an outline schedule of activities to monitor Safeguarding and will also finalise this with the incoming trustee for Safeguarding.
- The lead Trustee reports that she is confident that the culture of Safeguarding continues to improve.

6. Child Protection Policy

- The Child Protection Policy is based on the template from The Key and addresses the key areas as set out in KCSiE 2023. It includes relevant information from the HCC model. The policy is hosted on the school's website.
- Staff and trustees are reminded to read the policy each year and training highlights key changes and updates.
- Staff report that they have undertaken quizzes to ensure that they have understood the training.
- There are some useful flowcharts and diagrams which help to illustrate safeguarding processes.
- In discussion we noted that the emphasis on verbal reporting in serious cases, in addition to reports on CPOMs, was not as clear in the policy and leaders are keen to ensure the consistency of policy and practice.

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7. Other policy and procedures

- The school has a range of appropriate additional policies such as Attendance and Punctuality, Behaviour Policy and an Anti-Bullying Policy. These are hosted on the school's website. The school also has a Staff Code of Conduct.
- Leaders have an online safety policy, and filtering and monitoring is managed by the DSL in line with KCSiE 2023. Leaders have invested in a software programme called Smooth Wall which they report is very effective. Leaders note that there is round the clock monitoring so that any breaches can be tackled promptly. Leaders note that Smooth Wall will call them in serious cases but normally breaches are reported in written format.

8. Reporting and recording

- A number of cases were reviewed. This review showed that concerns were followed up in a timely fashion and that the school worked effectively within a multi-agency context. Serious concerns were addressed within the hour
- Safeguarding leaders are confident that staff are robust in reporting any concerns. Leaders report that there is a strong emphasis in training on the depth of information recorded. We considered that a description of the person's role would be helpful e.g. Mum/social worker alongside the initials or name of the person.
- The school has developed a 'wishes and feelings toolkit' to ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are considered. A range of therapeutic approaches is in place to support children including pony, canine and sandtray therapy.

9. Alternative Provision

- Leaders have established an internal adapted provision noted above. This is the centre for Alternative Meaningful Opportunities (AMO).

10. Single Central Record

- The school uses the Single Central Record system for their single central record (SCR), and this includes all the relevant and appropriate checks for staff.
- The SCR is managed by the HR and administration manager who maintains the SCR at both sites in the Trust.
- The HR and administration manager is knowledgeable about the processes required to effectively maintain the SCR and also retains a professional curiosity to continue to refine and improve her practice.
- The SCR is password protected.
- The SCR is checked by the HT every two months.

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- Trustees don't currently review the SCR but this would be welcomed by the HR adviser.

11. Personnel files

- A selection of personnel files was reviewed alongside the SCR. All the appropriate information was contained within the files. The date that documents were copied and checked was visible on the documents viewed.
- We discussed the requirement for application forms to have a wet signature and this can be done alongside other recruitment checks.
- The process around advising candidates that an online search will be undertaken was also discussed.
- The personnel files for trustees were kept in a separate location under the supervision of a different staff member and these files were not available to be viewed at the time of the visit. The HR and administration manager was keen to ensure that this situation is addressed.

12. Curriculum

- Further enhancements to the PSHE/ RSE curriculum have been implemented since the last safeguarding review in 2022.
- Leaders report that the 'One Decision' programme has been supplemented by the Jigsaw Scheme of Work. This was in response to staff feedback where staff indicated that they required more detailed resources for exploring different topics.
- This curriculum is supported by circle time sessions several times per week so that there is a follow up discussion. Leaders describe a culture of regular informal discussion so that learners are able to systematically develop their understanding of building better relationships. On Mondays learners can discuss what has happened over the weekend. Thematic assemblies further support learning in this area.
- E-safety and on-line learning are addressed both in PSHE and in Computing lessons. Leaders are pleased with the KAPOW Primary Computing Scheme of Work. The KAPOW programme is an online programme which teaches students how to make themselves safer online e.g. through setting a more secure password.
- Leaders note that over time students are learning not only how to keep themselves safe but also to keep their friends safe, and that they can trust the school team and other trusted adults.
- Leaders note that the school rules about being 'safe' and 'trusted' remain paramount.
- Some lessons are delivered in single gender groups to ensure students feel comfortable engaging with complex issues relating to sexual relationships.
- Learning is supplemented and reiterated via form tutor sessions, assemblies, visitors and in-school events.
- Leaders observe that there is a value of the month such as kindness and gratitude which further supports discussion around building healthy relationships.

13. Staff

- A small group of staff, both teachers and support staff, was spoken to. This group included staff that were relatively new to the school and others that had worked at the school for a number of years. These members of staff reported that:
 - Safeguarding was a priority at the school and that the safeguarding culture was pervasive across the school.
 - The staff spoken to noted that the safeguarding team had expanded and this had led to greater capacity to respond to issues. The staff spoken to felt that safeguarding in school is effective and the effectiveness has been increased by the addition of the new members of staff.
 - Staff noted that while attendance at school was generally good they recognised the efforts made by leaders to increase attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism particularly through the AMO provision and Forest School.
 - The staff recalled that they had received training on a variety of safeguarding issues: changes to KCSiE, online safety, domestic violence, sexualised behaviours. They noted that there had been regular training on safeguarding issues and that training occurred in a variety of methods: drip-feeding, scenario based, online, quizzes, group discussions and guest speakers. Staff reported that they found the varied approach effective.
 - Staff appreciate the care exhibited by leaders who regularly check in when staff have dealt with a difficult safeguarding issue. Staff also appreciate that whenever possible they are kept informed about the concern that they have raised.
 - Staff described safeguarding information as part of the 'pieces of a puzzle' and were clear that they often held different pieces.
 - Staff noted that all safeguarding concerns were taken very seriously.
 - The staff were positive about the Rainbow chat box system which leads to a private 1:1 chat around safeguarding issues.

14. Students

- Students were spoken to in 2 separate groups, one group of girls and one of boys.
 - The students spoken to reported that they feel safe in school. The teachers and other adults make them feel safe, they know that staff care for them and want them to be safe.
 - They noted that staff use calm voices and don't shout. They also said that staff treated them nicely and they took them out of class if they needed to be reminded about behaviour.
 - Pupils noted that that they are supervised at all times and this makes them

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- feel safe.
- Pupils were aware that the register is taken and they were clear about what would happen if a child was not where they should be.
- The children felt that their concerns were taken seriously. They knew about the Rainbow box if they wanted to have a chat about a safeguarding issue although some felt that the process could be more discreet once they had raised a concern.
- They were able to describe how they deal with their emotions by using supports such as the 'blue thing'. This also helped them feel calmer and therefore safer.
- They know who the safeguarding team are, they have seen the posters around school. They all can identify multiple adults at the school that they feel comfortable talking to.
- They are taught about e-safety in Computing and in PSHE lessons. They also have key messages reiterated in assemblies.
- Students recalled being taught about road safety recently.
- Some students talked about going on school trips. Some felt that going on a trip might be a time when they could be unsafe however all could describe a process to identify a safe adult if they were outside school on a trip or in the local community outside of school hours.
- Last year students had identified the 'Free Space' area as a place in school where they felt less safe. This did not come up as an issue in the way it had done last year. Leaders have repainted one free space area with a nautical theme and have plans for a similarly themed painted area in the other 'Free Space' zone.

15. Parents

- A range of parents were invited to give their views about safeguarding in school. The parents were mostly mothers but there was also a grandmother. Some parents had children that had joined the school relatively recently while others had children who had been in school for several years.
- The parents were overwhelmingly positive about safeguarding and many other aspects of school life. They used adjectives such as transformational, communicative, inclusive, non-judgmental, life changing for them and their children and described a partnership approach in terms of working with the school team.
- Parents recalled that students had been taught about online safety.
- Parents described a wider culture around behaviour which contributed to children feeling safe. They noted that there is a daily report which can be useful and the focus is on the positive which enables students to feel safer. Parents reported that boundaries and expectations are clear and consistent.

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- Parents appreciated the positive and proactive approach of staff.
- Parents confirmed that it is acceptable to be different and staff are tenacious in trying to help families resolve barriers to learning.

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Part C: Recommendations:

Leaders had enacted most of the recommendations from the previous review in 2022.

We noted that in December 2023 new statutory guidance for 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' has been released. This updated documentation will need to be reflected in relevant policies and practice as it comes due for review.

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of safeguarding, leaders should consider the following points:

1. Environment

- Consider asking visitors to verbally confirm that they have read the safeguarding information presented as part of the sign-in procedures.

2. Safeguarding Team

- Leaders have put in place a range of procedures to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding. Leaders could consider formalising this with an overarching schedule of all of the safeguarding activities that they undertake. This should capture existing and planned activity to:
 - provide a clear overview of the broad range of safeguarding activity
 - provide a framework by which leaders can check that intended activity is being implemented as intended and that it achieves the intended impact
 - help leaders to sequence safeguarding activity strategically so that the maximum value can be gained from each activity.
- This framework could be incorporated alongside the trustee's schedule for review of safeguarding activity and be factored into the safeguarding report for trustees.

3. Concerns regarding staff

- No further recommendations.

4. Training

- No further recommendations.

5. Governance

- Leaders are developing a termly report to trustees that summarises key data such as the number of concerns raised, number of children on a CP plan etc. the safeguarding issues and cases in the setting. This will allow trustees to review patterns and trends and to identify lines of enquiry for their visits and reviews in school.

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- Trustees should consider a review of the SCR as part of their safeguarding review schedule.

6. Child Protection Policy

- Leaders are considering an amendment to the Child Protection Policy which better reflects current practice regarding serious concerns which are reported verbally as well as in written form.

7. Other policy documentation

- No further recommendations.

8. Reporting and recording

- Ensure that the role of the person is also recorded in the concern report e.g. Alice (Mum) not just Alice.

9. Alternative Provision

- No further recommendations.

10. Single Central Record

- No further recommendations.

11. Personnel Files

- Where application forms are sent in electronically, without a handwritten signature, ask candidates to sign their application form when attending for interview. KCSiE 2023 para. 218.
- Ensure that all personnel files are accessible to the HR and Administration Manager.
- Consider informing candidates that they will be subject to an online check in the invitation to interview. KCSiE 2023 para. 221.

12. Curriculum

- No further recommendations.

13. Staff

- No further recommendations.

14. Students

- No further recommendations.

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15. Parents

- No further recommendations.

Name:	Fiona Tobin	School Effectiveness Adviser	Date report completed:	19 th January 2024
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