

# Safeguarding in schools: best practice

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This report illustrates and evaluates the features of best practice in safeguarding, based on inspection evidence from the 19% of all maintained primary, secondary and special schools, residential special schools and pupil referral units inspected between September 2009 and July 2010 where safeguarding had been judged outstanding. It also draws on a more detailed analysis and evaluation of safeguarding practice in a small sample of outstanding schools visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors.

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## Introduction

Improvements in safeguarding have been rapid and widespread in recent years, and nearly all schools now give an appropriately high priority to getting their safeguarding procedures right. In her commentary on the findings set out in Ofsted's 2009/10 Annual Report, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wrote:

'Safeguarding...is an issue addressed not only with increasing sureness by those responsible for keeping children and learners safe, but one felt keenly by those most vulnerable to harm and neglect.'<sup>1</sup>

There can be no issue of greater importance to parents and carers, or to schools, than the safety of their children; safeguarding remains high on Ofsted's agenda and will continue to do so. The purpose of this good practice report is to identify the features of exceptionally good safeguarding.

There is no reason why good practice in safeguarding should not be a feature of every school; the practice described here is replicable – with a sensible awareness of the local context – in every school. It complies with requirements and often moves beyond them; it is not seen as a burden but as a reasonable and essential part of the fabric of the school; it pays attention to the meticulous and systematic implementation of policies and routines; it involves every member of the school community in some way; and it has a sharp eye on the particular circumstances and needs of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable.

Inspection and regulation have helped to focus minds on the need to ensure that all appropriate steps have been taken to guarantee and promote children's safety. This report seeks to distil the best practice seen in the best schools – the 19% of schools which were judged to be outstanding in their safeguarding procedures in 2009/10. It addresses the question: 'What can schools with some way to go learn from the best?' Evidence from this group of schools has been augmented with more detailed evidence taken from a small sample of schools visited by HMI with a view to investigating further the features of successful practice in effective schools.

Given the high priority afforded to the safety of children and young people and the considerable media interest in Ofsted's role in protecting children, almost inevitably 'scare stories' emerge from time to time about the inspection of safeguarding.

The key word for both inspectors and providers in the area of safeguarding is 'reasonable', and it is around the interpretation of 'reasonable' that a mythology has emerged. The record can be set straight. Ofsted does not require schools to build walls around play areas; it does not expect schools to seek Criminal Records Bureau checks on casual visitors to schools, including parents; it does not judge a school to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2009/10*, Ofsted, [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-200910](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-200910).

be inadequate because of minor administrative errors, or because an inspector's ID was not checked. Ofsted does not try to 'catch schools out'.

The schools which were involved in the survey are listed at the end of this report and each has confirmed its willingness to be contacted and to share its good practice with others.

## Safeguarding: a definition

1. Ofsted adopts the definition of safeguarding used in the Children Act 2004 and in the Department for Education and Skills (now DfE) guidance document *Working together to safeguard children*, which focuses on safeguarding and promoting children's and learners' welfare.<sup>2</sup> This can be summarised as:
  - protecting children and learners from maltreatment
  - preventing 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.
2. Two key inspection issues follow from this definition:
  - the effectiveness of settings and services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and learners are safe
  - the effectiveness of settings and services in helping to ensure that children and learners feel safe.
3. Governing bodies of maintained schools and local authorities must comply with the Education Act 2002 (section 175) and have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The DfES (now DfE) guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*, makes it clear that schools must provide a safe environment and take action to identify and protect any children or young people who are at risk of significant harm.<sup>3</sup> Schools are required to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people; to promote safe practice and challenge unsafe practice; to ensure that staff receive the necessary training for their roles; and to work in partnership with other agencies providing services for children and young people. Local authorities have a duty to provide model policies and procedures on all aspects of safeguarding and to ensure that schools are aware of, and comply with, their

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<sup>2</sup> *Working together to safeguard children*, Department for Education and Skills, 2006; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/WT2006](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/WT2006).

<sup>3</sup> *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*, Department for Education and Skills, 2006; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-04217-2006](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-04217-2006).

responsibilities. As part of this, they offer advice and training for schools' staff and governors.

4. In evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in schools, inspectors focus on a broad range of issues including:
  - the impact of safeguarding arrangements on outcomes for pupils, including staying safe, being healthy, making a positive contribution, enjoying and achieving, and developing skills for economic well-being
  - how well pupils are taught to keep themselves safe
  - how well the school protects pupils from bullying, racist abuse, harassment or discrimination, and promotes good behaviour
  - the effectiveness of health and safety policies and procedures, including conducting necessary risk assessments as well as regular checks on equipment and premises
  - the effectiveness of arrangements to provide a safe environment and secure school site
  - how well the school meets the needs of pupils with medical conditions
  - how appropriately child welfare and child protection concerns are identified and responded to by the school
  - how effectively the school works with key agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
  - how well the school prioritises safeguarding, and monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its policies and practices
  - the extent to which the school ensures that adults working with children are appropriately recruited and vetted, and receive appropriate training, guidance, support and supervision to undertake the effective safeguarding of pupils.
5. The effectiveness of safeguarding is taken into account when judging other aspects of a school's work including care, guidance and support for pupils; the effectiveness of the governing body; the effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being; pupils' behaviour; and the extent to which pupils feel safe.

## The national picture

6. Parents, carers and children should feel reassured that almost all schools now take a careful and responsible approach to their safeguarding arrangements. In 2009/10, the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures in maintained schools was good or outstanding in 77% of schools, although this overall percentage masks variation across the sector. For example, safeguarding was good or outstanding in 85% of special schools and 81% of pupil referral units, compared with 77% of secondary schools and 75% of primary schools. It was

outstanding in 65% of nursery schools, 46% of special schools, 32% of pupil referral units, 19% of secondary schools and 15% of primary schools.

7. On the other hand, safeguarding arrangements in 21% of schools were only satisfactory overall, indicating the need for considerable improvement. Arrangements were inadequate – unacceptable in other words – in 2% of schools (including 5% of pupil referral units). Weaknesses in safeguarding are usually related to broader failings in leadership, management and governance. In the small number of schools where safeguarding was judged to be inadequate, common weaknesses included:
  - the failure to maintain a single central record of recruitment and vetting checks covering all adults who had regular contact with children
  - insufficient child protection training
  - key risk assessments not completed
  - a failure by the governing body to monitor and review the policies to protect children.
  
8. The media has in recent years reported that Ofsted is judging schools to be inadequate ('failing') solely on the basis of weaknesses in their safeguarding arrangements. This is very rarely the case. Indeed, in 2009/10, of over 6,000 schools inspected, only 26 were judged to be inadequate for issues related solely to safeguarding. In these cases, breaches will have been serious; inspectors turn to safeguarding early in a visit, allowing simple errors to be corrected before they leave.

## Key features of outstanding practice

9. Most of the features of outstanding practice are found, to a greater or lesser extent, in all effective schools with outstanding safeguarding arrangements. It is a wide-ranging list; in outstanding schools safeguarding permeates all aspects of school life. These features are covered in more detail in the body of the report and illustrated with examples of best practice from outstanding schools. In summary, the key features of outstanding practice include:
  - high-quality leadership and management that makes safeguarding a priority across all aspects of a school's work
  - stringent vetting procedures in place for staff and other adults
  - rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures in place, written in plain English, compliant with statutory requirements and updated regularly; in particular, clear and coherent child protection policies
  - child protection arrangements that are accessible to everyone, so that pupils and families, as well as adults in the school, know who they can talk to if they are worried

- excellent communication systems with up-to-date information that can be accessed and shared by those who need it
- a high priority given to training in safeguarding, generally going beyond basic requirements, extending expertise widely and building internal capacity
- robust arrangements for site security, understood and applied by staff and pupils
- a curriculum that is flexible, relevant and engages pupils' interest; that is used to promote safeguarding, not least through teaching pupils how to stay safe, how to protect themselves from harm and how to take responsibility for their own and others' safety
- courteous and responsible behaviour by the pupils, enabling everyone to feel secure and well-protected
- well thought out and workable day-to-day arrangements to protect and promote pupils' health and safety
- rigorous monitoring of absence, with timely and appropriate follow-up, to ensure that pupils attend regularly
- risk assessment taken seriously and used to good effect in promoting safety.

## **The leadership and management of safeguarding**

10. Inspection shows that outstanding schools have outstanding leadership and management, and where safeguarding arrangements are equally outstanding leaders and managers show a determination to make safeguarding a priority across all aspects of the school's work. Senior managers give clear direction and harness the energy and commitment of their staff. They establish comprehensive and coherent policies and procedures which make clear the school's high expectations. All safeguarding arrangements are kept under close and regular review, and the schools learn from their findings and act quickly on any safeguarding issues that arise.
11. High standards are set for all aspects of safeguarding practice; effective schools make sure that these standards are upheld by all concerned. Attention to detail is a crucial factor in their success, and pupils' safety and well-being are central to all that the schools do. A willingness to go beyond the minimum required of them is indicative of a commitment to giving their best for the benefit of their pupils.
12. Channels of communication are simple and effective. Each member of staff knows what they are responsible for and how their safeguarding duties relate to those of others.
13. Staff, governors, pupils, parents and external partners are consulted to ensure that policies are sustainable. As a result, effective schools achieve consistency in their safeguarding practice with a positive impact on pupils' sense of well-

being and security; an excellent springboard from which to concentrate on their learning. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect and their views are listened to.

14. Staff, pupils, governors, other professionals and volunteers are absolutely clear about what is expected of them and the contribution that they and others make to safeguarding. Staffing structures are designed so that responsibilities for all the different aspects of safeguarding are defined and transparent. Accountability is established at all levels in the schools.
15. Effective leaders successfully establish an ethos and culture based on mutual respect and acceptance of differences, where safeguarding is everyone's business and everyone's responsibility. They involve staff, pupils, families, external partners and visitors in creating this culture and putting in place the policies, procedures and very practical approaches needed to turn it into a reality in young people's lives.
16. Senior managers are visible around the schools and accessible to pupils, staff, families and visitors. It is not unusual for them to 'meet and greet' pupils on arrival at school. They are available when staff need their support and have clear arrangements in place that enable them to respond to any incidents without delay. They follow up concerns about attendance promptly and appropriately, recognising that important features of a safe school are that parents know exactly where their children are and that staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils attend lessons as expected and punctually.

At Stratton Upper School and Community College, leaders and managers monitored safeguarding data, such as the number of hours that students spent in the 'retreat' or 'remove' centres, the take-up of extended activities, referrals from police, attendance, exclusions, incidents of bullying, and complaints. The electronic recording system facilitated the efficient retrieval and analysis of this data and enabled the school to address areas for improvement swiftly.

At Ely Pupil Referral Unit, senior managers conducted systematic reviews of policies and procedures. They evaluated data, for example relating to attendance, accidents, incidents, teenage pregnancies, re-offending rates, and how safe pupils feel. They took action to address areas which required improvement, for example through the curriculum.

17. Schools with outstanding leadership and management promote the genuine involvement of staff at all levels in maintaining high standards and putting children and young people first. Quality assurance is integral to daily practice, with schools acting on the findings of their monitoring activities. Senior managers ensure that their policies and practices are current, in line with statutory requirements and national guidance, often exceeding minimum requirements. They trust their staff to carry out their duties with diligence and to contribute effectively to the whole-school improvement of safeguarding.

18. Leaders and managers put in place safeguarding policies and procedures which reflect their rigour and close attention to detail because they are:
  - written in straightforward language so that they are easy to understand and accessible to those who need to use them
  - compliant with statutory requirements and national and local guidance
  - cross-referenced to other policies to ensure coherence and consistency
  - updated regularly to ensure that they remain accurate and relevant.
19. Practice is consistent across each school, supported by the sharing of accurate and up-to-date information. Effective schools have mastered this. Those which have electronic recording systems, accessible to staff via a shared system, say that this helps to avoid the pitfalls sometimes associated with trying to keep paper copies and bound-book records. Through electronic systems, staff can access and share a wealth of information such as policies and procedures; risk assessments; individual care and education plans; behaviour and incident records; records of contacts with families; curriculum planning documents; planning for educational visits; and training records. They can use these systems for day-to-day recording and reporting, for example of health and safety matters which require the attention of the site supervisor. This improves the efficiency and speed with which schools can respond to safeguarding matters and enables teachers to be proactive in taking account of safeguarding when planning their lessons and extra-curricular activities. Senior managers put into place protocols and procedures to protect confidentiality and restrict access to data where appropriate.
20. Senior managers encourage their staff to draw on the expertise of other agencies and professionals to support and protect pupils and their families. For example, at Green Lane Community Special School, the school nurse brought valuable expertise to the staff team and provided support for pupils and their families. The speech and language therapist and the occupational therapist each had an important role in extending staff expertise and working with pupils. In the Vale of Evesham School, the full-time e-learning technician played a key role in protecting pupils from harm when using the internet. At Turton High School Media Arts College, a full-time mental health worker had been appointed through cluster funding to support work with students, families and staff.

## **Recruitment and the suitability of staff and other adults**

21. A feature of outstanding safeguarding is the way that senior managers ensure that stringent recruitment and vetting procedures are in place for staff and other adults: nobody commences work unless all checks have been completed, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau. The same rigour is applied when appointing volunteers. Contracts with supply agencies are specific about the checks required and schools ask for additional evidence of identification before staff are allowed to commence work at the school.

22. Senior administrators, such as a bursar, generally take responsibility for ensuring that all checks are carried out and supported by relevant evidence, and that appropriate records are kept, including the single central register of staff and other adults. Governors are aware of their responsibilities. School inspection reports sometimes draw out the relationship between pupils' feelings of security and safeguarding procedures in school. For example, 'When asked, pupils are quick to state that they enjoy school and feel safe. None of this is surprising as the care, guidance and support that staff offer pupils are strong elements of provision and staff vetting and safeguarding are taken very seriously.'<sup>4</sup>
23. The schools visited liaised closely with their local authorities to ensure that their procedures were compliant with national requirements; in practice the schools usually exceeded national guidance. They also liaised with local authorities to process checks on potential candidates for posts.
24. Many senior leaders and governors, typically the chair of governors, complete safer recruitment training. In one school, pupils were involved in the recruitment of staff; they were given training for this role and were aware of the need to protect confidentiality – they took this role seriously.
25. Information is increasingly held on electronic systems, usually in the form of a single central register, which allows for ease of access and updating, is held centrally, and includes all the necessary information listed in current DCSF/DfE guidance. One school included additional information, such as the person's start date and job role, so that the register was helpful to them as a more complete record. Registers are sometimes linked directly to local authority recruitment databases, which speeds up the sharing and checking of information.

## Training to safeguard learners

26. Training in safeguarding is given a high priority in effective schools. Expertise is extended effectively and internal capacity is built up. Managers ensure that staff regularly undertake a comprehensive range of training to promote safe practice in classrooms, around the school and off site. Designated staff are trained and accredited in specialist areas of work, such as manual lifting and handling, sometimes to a standard which enables them to train others in-house. This helps staff to maintain their skills and gives them ready access to specialist advice.
27. The high priority now given to training in safeguarding matters is a feature of many inspection reports. For example: 'Safeguarding is a weekly item for staff meetings, and posters and displays ensure it has a high profile within the whole school community.'<sup>5</sup> Outstanding schools typically exceed the minimum

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Albion Primary School

<sup>5</sup> Melbourne Junior School

expectation of refresher training every three years for all staff and every two years for designated child protection staff. They provide annual training for all staff, supplemented by regular updates in staff meetings and underpinned by accurate records of the training undertaken by each member of staff, including volunteers and student teachers.

In the Vale of Evesham school, volunteers were invited to join in staff training sessions. The school had produced a leaflet for volunteers which was recognised as good practice and had been adopted by the local authority for use in other schools.

28. Some schools use staff handbooks to provide key information and guidance so that staff know exactly what is expected of them and how they should deal with any safeguarding matters. For example, in relation to child protection issues, they know what to look out for, who to report concerns to, and what the agreed referral procedures are. Other day-to-day routines, such as staffing arrangements at break times, are also made clear, adding consistency to the way that staff carry out their roles.
29. Effective induction programmes for new staff give high priority to safeguarding, recognising that all staff should have the necessary basic training before they work with pupils. New staff need clear, easily accessible written guidance so that they can quickly become familiar with the school's particular ways of working.

Good, systematic induction helped all staff at Stratton Upper School and Community College to understand how to play their part in safeguarding. New staff downloaded and personalised their induction timetables from the school's website. Regular checks by line managers ensured that all members of staff were trained to prioritise safeguarding from their first days in the school. One new member of staff said that 'thinking about the safeguarding needs of the pupils became second nature to me very quickly. Because I had been over the procedures with my line manager, I knew exactly who to turn to when I was worried about a pupil in my second week in the school'.

30. Effective schools make good use of specialist staff to support the safeguarding agenda, taking advantage of the range of professional expertise available on site, such as the school nurse, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, and mental health worker. Staff actively draw on the expertise of other agencies and professionals. This has a positive impact on:
- the protection of pupils and their families, and support for them
  - the flexibility and relevance of the curriculum
  - the range and quality of staff training.
31. The use of external specialist support can help schools to keep their safeguarding practice sharp and in line with statutory requirements and

national and local guidance. The schools revisited for this survey generally value and make good use of external support from their local authorities, including:

- the development of model policies and procedures for all aspects of safeguarding
- training for staff and governors, for example in child protection
- advice and support for the recruitment and vetting of adults
- access to authority-wide databases, such as those relating to risk assessments
- regular health and safety audits and recommendations for improvement.

32. High expectations of safeguarding practice extend to other on-site provision such as the nursery or school clubs.

Senior managers at Woodston Primary School worked in partnership with the on-site committee-managed nursery to ensure that safeguarding arrangements were robust. All staff employed in the nursery underwent the same recruitment and vetting checks as those in the school.

33. Effective schools ensure that staff have a detailed knowledge of pupils' individual care needs as well as their academic needs and take these into account when working with them and their families.

Of particular note, in the two special schools visited, was the degree of knowledge that staff had of pupils' communication difficulties and the programmes and staff training that they put in place to help pupils overcome these difficulties. Speech and language therapists worked in partnership with staff to help pupils to communicate more effectively and so reduce their frustration, improve their behaviour, remain calm and minimise the risk of harm to themselves and others.

## Keeping the school's environment safe

34. It is rare nowadays for inspection to uncover serious concerns about the security of a school site. Arrangements are generally robust, understood and applied by staff and pupils; inspection reports sometimes comment on the speed with which headteachers have reacted to any concerns about site security raised by parents or pupils. In one of the schools visited in the survey, as an extra precaution, parents were asked to sign their children in and out of the before- and after-school club each day.
35. Where there is nursery or extended school provision on site, senior managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements in these settings are implemented with the same rigour and to the same exacting standards as applied elsewhere in the school.

36. Careful attention is paid to the physical environment and how space is used to promote learning, while at the same time ensuring that pupils' safety and well-being are protected. Daily routines promote good order which adds to pupils feeling safe. Hygiene, cleanliness and tidiness in all areas of the schools are given high priority; hazards and clutter are routinely removed to prevent accidents or incidents. Premises and accommodation are maintained to high standards, with any faults or defects being rectified without delay.
37. Effective leaders do all they can to ensure that staff know how to cope with critical incidents or emergencies such as fire. The critical incident plan at The Deepings School, for example, was well understood and provided a model of best practice in the area. In the event of any form of critical incident, it provided a clear framework to support the school in planning and carrying out immediate actions, managing its response and returning to normality. Roles and responsibilities were made clear, as were arrangements for partial or full evacuation of the premises. After student deaths connected with road traffic accidents, the plan had been used to good effect to support the whole school community.
38. Effective schools recognise the importance of caring for pupils' emotional well-being and the central part that this plays in them feeling safe and secure. Larger schools sometimes create areas where pupils can go for additional support or guidance. These can be particularly effective for pupils who are vulnerable or at risk for a variety of reasons. Two examples are given below.

The student support centre at Turton High School Media Arts College had been an important development, creating a calm environment and helping students to deal with their anxiety and frustrations. As a result, there had been fewer incidents in the school. Pastoral support staff were trained in specific issues, such as drugs awareness, and ran self-help groups for students.

Stratton Upper School and Community College had established two distinct areas: the first, known as 'the retreat', was recognised as a lifeline for students who needed a less hectic environment in a large school. A second area, called 'the remove', had been established in the school to support students at risk of exclusion. The school worked with partners, such as the youth offending team and the integrated youth service, to offer a personalised curriculum which could lead to students reintegrating into the main school.

## Child protection

39. It was one of Lord Laming's recommendations in his report of 12 March 2009 that:

‘Ofsted should revise the inspection and improvement regime for schools giving greater prominence to how well schools are fulfilling their responsibilities for child protection.’<sup>6</sup>

40. It is therefore encouraging to find that almost all schools are aware of current government requirements for child protection and that they implement proper procedures, with clear and coherent child protection policies and procedures which meet statutory requirements and comply with local safeguarding children's board guidance. They are regularly monitored by senior managers, and responsibilities for the different aspects of child protection are specified and understood by all staff.
41. Staff at schools with effective child protection procedures have a good understanding of the possible causes of abuse, neglect or harm. They know what to look for, who the designated staff are and the routes that a referral would go through in the school, including the roles of the different external agencies that may need to become involved during the process.
42. They typically have successfully established a culture of openness and transparency which encourages vigilance and a sense of shared responsibility for the protection of children and young people. They have secure referral systems in place and pupils, staff, parents and other adults know how to report their concerns. Pupils and adults feel confident that they can express their views and that these will be listened to and treated seriously. Essentially, child protection arrangements are clear to everyone; pupils and their families know who they can talk to if they are worried. They know that child protection issues will be dealt with sensitively and in confidence.

Monton Green Primary School had produced an information booklet for parents and carers of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This not only informed them about the class groups and what their children would be learning, but also made clear the daily routines, arrangements for dropping off and collecting children, permissions that parents could give, procedures for medicals and medication, and gave examples of healthy lunch boxes. The EYFS requirement for a ‘key person’ for each child was also applied throughout the school and to before- and after-school club provision. The school was particularly good at ensuring that communication with parents of children who attend both the school and the before- and after-school clubs was seamless.

43. These outstanding schools work closely with professionals from different agencies, a factor often recognised as key to the effectiveness of the schools’ child protection arrangements. In several schools, inspectors heard other

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<sup>6</sup> *The protection of children in England: a progress report*, recommendation 10, The Lord Laming, The Stationery Office, 2009;  
[www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/HC%20330](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/HC%20330).

professionals speak of the schools as having an 'open door', being willing to listen, being flexible in their responses and proactive in seeking to protect children and young people from harm.

In the Vale of Evesham School, which offers residential provision, there was clarity, coherence and consistency in child protection arrangements across the school and residential provision. Careful attention to detail in meetings, handovers, liaison with families and record keeping ensured that staff had a shared understanding of pupils' individual needs and the provision in place for them.

## Health and safety

44. Schools with outstanding safeguarding arrangements invariably pay careful attention to pupils' health and safety, with a focus on prevention and the maintenance of high standards. Day-to-day arrangements to protect pupils' health and safety are well thought out and workable in practice.
45. Health and safety are carefully monitored in effective schools, so that senior managers and governors are aware of areas where improvements could be made with an eye to prevention rather than cure.

Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policies on pupil outcomes were routine at Stratton Upper School and Community College and effective steps were taken to improve practice. For example, information from risk assessments had influenced the timing of classes and the flow of students in corridors to avoid crush and accidents.

At Monton Green Primary School, all staff had been involved in conducting an audit of the school environment which focused not just on the physical building but also on how the space was organised and used to best effect, to improve teaching and learning.

Two of the schools visited had created quieter areas to offer calm in a large busy school. The XL Centre was a safe haven where students at Congleton High School could access specialist teaching and resources. It was open before and after school and at break and lunchtimes and offered a warm and welcoming place to meet with friends. Students at The Deepings School, who were less comfortable mixing with others in a whole-school setting at break times, had the option of attending 'Breakers'. Here, supervised by staff, they were able to remain inside and socialise with a smaller group of their peers.

46. Schools with effective provision for their pupils' health and safety do not neglect their dignity and privacy either, for example by taking particular care to protect those with medical care needs. Arrangements for the storage of medicines or toxic substances are well understood by staff. Staff are clear about the schools' policies for first aid and emergency aid and know the designated staff to whom

pupils should be referred should the need arise. Some schools arrange for all support staff to receive first-aid training. There are references in section 5 reports to schools that provide all pupils with a course in basic first aid. Staff who are authorised to give medication receive appropriate training for the role. At Woodston Primary School, where there was a swimming pool on site, all staff received annual training in resuscitation.

47. Risk assessment is taken very seriously in schools with outstanding safeguarding arrangements, and is undertaken to good effect in promoting safety. Such assessments cover all aspects of the school's work, such as premises and equipment, on-site activities, off-site activities and the venues used, use of minibuses and other forms of transport. Where relevant, risk assessments are carried out for individual pupils, and supported by action plans outlining how any identified risks would be managed. Although pupils have some awareness of the risk assessment process in their schools, they could play a more active role in conducting risk assessments both generally and in relation to their own personal needs.
  
48. In some schools, electronic systems for conducting risk assessments were said to be invaluable. At Stratton Upper School and Community College, those responsible for arranging educational visits were pleased with the electronic risk assessment system in place in the county. The electronic system stored and retrieved data already provided by other schools for some trips and prompted a very full assessment each time. At Ely Pupil Referral Unit, an electronic risk assessment reporting system was in place which enabled the school's educational visits coordinator to link directly to the local authority database. This system stored and shared information about the venues and activities which were already known to the local authority. It helped the unit to assess the suitability of visits and to enter in the exact needs of each student, which could then alert the school to any particular risks it needed to be aware of. It had the added advantage of enabling the school to review and analyse data about, for example, the number of students on different trips, individual pupil participation, or how many art-related trips have taken place.
  
49. Regular health and safety audits of the premises are carried out by the schools' own staff, often supplemented by their local authorities conducting six-monthly or annual checks and advising on any improvements which are needed. Where there are good systems in place that are easy to follow, faults or damage can be reported and rectified quickly.

At Stratton Upper School and Community College, the on-site manager could respond to calls for repairs immediately for minor breakages and had good systems for ensuring prompt attention to other defects. Staff reported how they liked the support of the email system for reporting faults and repairs needed. Some senior staff had radio phones and could reach a trouble spot or respond to a security issue very quickly; these are important and valued features on a large site.

50. Inspection reports on effective schools frequently commend the site security arrangements, for example as 'tight but not obtrusive', or 'tempered by a common sense approach to assessing risk'. Effective arrangements exist for registering visitors to the site and helping them to feel welcomed rather than scrutinised. Pupils are aware that visitors must wear identification badges issued by school reception staff and that they should be cautious of anyone in the school who is not wearing a badge. Similar levels of security are in place for contractors working on site, with schools checking their identity carefully. Increasingly, inspectors report the use of security cameras around schools.

At the time of the survey visit to Woodston Primary School, significant building work was taking place on site. This had been managed very effectively to ensure the safety of pupils. Regular monthly meetings involved the Chair of Governors, the headteacher, local authority officers and the contractors. Daily school routines had been adjusted to minimise the risks to pupils. The pupils at Woodston had a good understanding of the safety measures put in place to protect them, for example the perimeter fencing.

51. Routines related to health and safety are carried out systematically and thoroughly in outstanding schools. For example, premises and grounds are kept free of hazards. Equipment is maintained to a high standard so that it does not pose a risk to anyone using it. Regular fire drills are carried out so that staff and pupils know what to do in the event of a fire and appropriate checks are made of fire-fighting equipment. Other safety checks, such as testing of electrical equipment, are routinely carried out by external contractors.
52. High standards in hygiene and cleanliness are evident in classrooms, corridors, dining areas and generally around school, reflecting the schools' desire to create a welcoming and safe environment for pupils to learn. Particular attention is given to higher risk areas such as laboratories, sports areas and technology rooms; pupils are taught how they should behave in these areas and how to handle equipment safely. Internet safety is given high priority, with appropriate safeguards placed on computer systems to prevent access to unsuitable sites.
53. The schools revisited for this survey were aware of their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act and took steps to improve accessibility to their premises and facilities, for example through the installation of more accessible showers and toilets to support and protect pupils with physical disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

The fire and emergency evacuation policy at Turton High School Media Arts College was very clear. An additional feature in this school was that, in discussion with parents, a personalised evacuation plan was drawn up for students with disabilities.

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<sup>7</sup> The Disability Discrimination Act 1995; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents).

54. Older students have more freedom but are also expected to take more responsibility. At Turton High School Media Arts College, for example, the 'travel-to-school policy' provided guidance for students on using their own transport, including their own cars. It included expectations of behaviour and car parking arrangements.
55. Accurate and up-to-date records are kept for all aspects of health and safety; electronic communication systems are effective in helping all staff to contribute to them. Good systems are in place for reporting health and safety matters to governors, enabling them to check that high standards were being maintained.

## **Promoting safeguarding through teaching and learning**

56. In outstanding schools, the curriculum is flexible, relevant and engages pupils' interest. It is also used to promote safeguarding, not least through teaching pupils how to stay safe, how to keep themselves from harm and how to take responsibility for their own and others' safety. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) plays a crucial part in teaching children and young people to recognise dangers and harmful situations and to know the preventative actions they can take to keep themselves safe. It can be a popular subject, seen as relevant to everyday life, with some aspects taught in specific sessions, such as sex and relationships education, and others taught across the curriculum. Effective PSHE programmes can also be tailored to local circumstances, for example where particular concerns in the neighbourhood have been identified.
57. Where safeguarding is given a high priority, however, senior managers ensure that it is a feature of all aspects of the curriculum, not just of PSHE. Teachers are expected to incorporate elements of safeguarding into their lesson objectives and schemes of work; consequently, safeguarding is seen as part of wider teaching and learning.
58. All schools in the survey were firm on internet safety, teaching pupils about the dangers to be aware of, including cyber bullying. However, school staff expressed concern about pupils' access to potentially harmful websites outside the school, where they may not have the same levels of protection. They stressed how essential it is that while pupils are in school they learn how to protect themselves so that they can transfer this awareness to their families. Two schools said that they ran extra sessions for families on internet awareness, but these were not always well attended.
59. All of the schools in the survey monitored pupils' use of the internet in school. The Vale of Evesham special school checked individual pupils very carefully and took steps to provide individual protection where it was needed; for example where monitoring showed an unwise interest in trying to access unsuitable websites. Pupils were taught the dangers of such behaviour and were required to sign contracts governing their use of the internet. Families were fully involved in this. The school had appointed a specialist technician with

responsibility for this level of monitoring and protection of vulnerable young people who did not always recognise the dangers they placed themselves in.

60. A common feature in outstanding schools is the desire and success in including all pupils in all aspects of school life regardless of their needs and difficulties. Participation in the full curriculum is encouraged for all pupils, with steps taken where necessary to minimise the risks involved.

At Stratton Upper School and Community College, there was a working farm on site which students were involved in running. They learnt very practical work skills as well as care and empathy for the animals. The students were routinely taught how to keep themselves safe in this environment. For example, they learnt to move safely and work safely around the farm site. Older students clearly used the language of risk assessment: 'in some situations we...'; 'it is likely that we would have to...'

61. Many schools make a positive contribution to the local community; this is a two-way process that usually involves them in making very good use of the wider community and visiting speakers to bring relevance to learning and to enhance pupils' understanding of safeguarding.

At Congleton High School, police and fire officers came into lessons to speak to students about dangers and how to protect themselves and others from harm. Other visiting speakers, facilitated by local churches, brought stories of immediate relevance to young people; for example, input from former drug addicts and people who had been homeless was reported as having a powerful effect on young people when considering the choices they could make and their consequences.

62. The outstanding schools visited, generally responded well to local circumstances by tailoring the curriculum to address issues affecting pupils. For example, at Stratton Upper School and Community College, police statistics showed high levels of illegal drinking among female students. The school took action to tackle this in the curriculum and practically, which included joint work to set up a diversionary group for girls on Friday nights. At Monton Green Primary School teachers had put safeguarding at the centre of their curriculum planning map, identifying opportunities to promote and develop awareness of safeguarding across all subjects. Other examples of adapting to local circumstances are given in the examples below.

At Turton High School Media Arts College, teachers routinely adapted their schemes of work and lesson planning to incorporate aspects of safeguarding wherever possible. This meant, for example, making clear the rules in potentially hazardous rooms, such as laboratories and workshops; in other lessons it could involve activities which encouraged students to relate to each other in a respectful manner, to cooperate and collaborate with others and to be aware of the impact of their own attitudes and behaviour on the safety and well-being of others.

The local authority ran 'staying safe' programmes to help pupils at Woodston Primary School to learn about road safety. Also, pupils in Years 5 and 6 took the 'safety challenge', in which they were presented with a series of scenarios – for example by the river, at home, or at the scene of a fire – and were asked to identify the risks and dangers in each of these circumstances.

Staff at Ely Pupil Referral Unit had a range of vocational qualifications, apart from teaching, that provided expertise in working in different subjects, such as car mechanics or catering. Detailed risk assessments were carried out for all curriculum areas and general guidance was available for students for situations such as holding tools correctly, using sharp objects safely, handling corrosive substances and safe storage of chemicals. In addition, students were given specific and personalised health and safety guidance in lessons. The curriculum prepared students well for risk beyond the classroom, for example when out on visits or work experience placements. This built their confidence and feeling of security.

63. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught the skills they will need for adult life. At Green Lane Community Special School, for example, the independent travel programme was a key element of the curriculum.

Pupils were taught in a structured and safe manner to travel within the local area using roads and public transport safely. They were taught the procedures to follow if things went wrong and this gave them confidence and helped them to be less reliant on others. Families were fully involved at all stages so that they were aware of the risks involved and the steps put in place to minimise them.

64. Two of the schools visited had successfully achieved the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award. This had a positive effect on their ethos and on pupils' sense of ownership and responsibility for themselves, the environment and other people. They had successfully promoted empowerment of pupils and contributed exceptionally well to their safety.
65. The schools visited emphasised that safeguarding was as much about pupils' emotional and mental well-being as it was about their physical well-being.

Turton High School and Media Arts College had taken additional steps to help students to recognise signs of mental or emotional stress and to seek support. Students had been involved in creating a website offering information and advice about mental health issues.

66. Attendance in these outstanding schools is carefully monitored, so that both the staff and parents know where the children and young people are at all times. All possible steps are taken to ensure that pupils attend school and unexplained or unauthorised absences are followed up speedily and rigorously. Such close

attention to the issue of attendance contributes strongly to the creation of an environment in which pupils' safety is paramount.

67. In outstanding schools, behaviour is invariably good or outstanding and this contributes significantly to pupils feeling safe. A culture of care is created where pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other and accept individual differences. There is a strong focus on developing social and emotional skills; as pupils mature they are able to reflect on their own and others' rights and responsibilities. Children and young people have confidence in their schools and trust the adults who work with them. Staff are approachable and helpful. Pupils feel secure and well protected, a feature reflected in positive attitudes to their school. Positive relationships are evident throughout; staff and pupils feel safe.
68. Courteous and responsible behaviour is expected in all of the schools visited. Pupils are taught to behave in this way and are involved in drawing up codes of conduct. They understand and accept the consequences for any misdemeanours.

At Woodston Primary School, the pupils' charter on rights and responsibilities encouraged responsibility and maturity not just in lessons but throughout the school day. The school's anti-bullying policy was very easy to understand and provided clear messages about what constitutes bullying and what pupils could do to tackle it. The impact of this approach is seen in the rarity of incidents of bullying or inappropriate behaviour and fixed-term exclusions.

## Notes

Ofsted inspectors revisited a sample of 12 schools in 2010. They were selected from the 19% of maintained primary, secondary and special schools, residential special schools and pupil referral units where safeguarding had been judged outstanding in section 5 inspections carried out between September 2009 and July 2010. Inspectors visited one pupil referral unit, one residential special school, one special school, four primary schools and five secondary schools.

Schools were invited to present the main features that had contributed to the outstanding provision and discuss these with inspectors. They organised the programme for the day and arranged for inspectors to speak with a range of people who could provide detail about their safeguarding practice. For example, discussions were held with senior managers, teaching staff, administrative and support staff, governors, pupils and parents/carers, external partners and local authority officers; although not all these people were interviewed in every school. Inspectors also scrutinised documents which showed evidence of safeguarding policies and records and undertook a tour of the school premises.

## Further information

Relevant, current government requirements for safeguarding in educational settings are set out in two key documents:

*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*, Department for Education, 2006; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-04217-2006](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-04217-2006).

*Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, Department for Education, 2010; [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00305-2010](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00305-2010).

## Annex A: List of schools visited

**Congleton High School:** an average sized secondary school for students aged 11 to 18 years. The school has specialist status for engineering.

**Darell Primary School:** a larger than average primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. The school has a small unit for pupils with cognition and learning needs.

**Ely Pupil Referral Unit:** a small pupil referral unit for up to 25 students in Key Stage 4 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

**Green Lane Community Special School:** a special school for pupils aged 4 to 16 years; it has 123 on roll. All pupils have statements of special educational needs, including moderate or severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

**Harrow Way Community School:** a smaller than average secondary school for students aged 11 to 16 years. It has specialist status for mathematics and computing. A range of extended services, including adult and family learning and a pre-school group, is based on site.

**Monton Green Primary School:** a larger than average primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. It has specialist provision for 10 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. It has extended school provision.

**Stratton Upper School and Community College:** a larger than average secondary school for students aged 9 to 13 years. The school has specialist status for mathematics and computing. It has a working farm.

**The Deepings – a business and enterprise college:** a larger than average school for students aged 11 to 18 years. The school has specialist status for business and enterprise.

**Turton High School Media Arts College:** a larger than average secondary school for students aged 11 to 18 years. It has specialist status as a media arts college. It has an adult education base on site as well as a community leisure centre.

**Vale of Evesham School:** a residential special school for pupils aged 2 to 19 years, including 15 weekly boarders. All pupils have statements of special educational needs: including moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties; autistic spectrum disorders; and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has specialist status for cognition and learning.

**William Cobbett Junior School:** a larger than average primary school for pupils aged 7 to 11 years. The school has a 20 place unit for pupils who have complex needs including learning, language, physical and behavioural difficulties.

**Woodston Primary School:** a smaller than average primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. An independently managed nursery shares the site and there is a breakfast- and after-school club.