

Stanbridge Earls School Review

Action Plan Update

Overview

In June 2013, Ofsted completed its review of the inspection history of Stanbridge Earls School. The review concluded that each of the inspections conducted during the period examined was problematic but for different reasons. The review made 20 recommendations. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, accepted these and commissioned responsible officers to develop and implement a relevant action plan.

This update confirms the actions that Ofsted has taken in response to the review. The cross-Ofsted Safeguarding Group will keep under review the progress and impact of these improvements and will continue to report findings to Ofsted's Operations Executive Board and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector.

Actions Update

Structure

1. Ofsted should restructure social care work with a stronger focus on the use of information and intelligence in the regions. The national allocation of work should be strengthened and supported by localised case management within the new regional structure with clear lines of accountability.

Action: Deputy Director, Social Care, full implementation by January 2014.

Update

Social Care Regulatory Inspectors (SCRI) and Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) have worked together in regional teams since February 2014. Localised management arrangements are firmly embedded and the majority of work is now allocated on a regional basis. Greater use is made of local intelligence gathered through local networks.

2. The three existing teams Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement/Complaints Against School/National Business Unit should be merged so that work does not fall down the gaps at the boundaries. Roles and responsibilities should be clarified and made explicit.

Action: Deputy Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance; Proposals by May 2013; full implementation by September 2013.

Update

These teams were brought together under a common senior manager in June 2013. Roles and responsibilities were clarified and made explicit with improvements to processes by September 2013 as planned. There was then some further integration of these teams in February 2014 when regulatory inspection was regionalised.

Systems

1. A system giving inspectors all the information at the point of inspection should be urgently established. It should be mandatory to check the system and read complaints and other information held. This should be reported formally in the inspection evidence base. Managers should sample staff's work to check that there is compliance. The Operations Executive Board should receive quarterly reports to ensure that this is put into practice and that there is proper oversight.

Action: Deputy Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance; Proposals by May 2013; improvements within 6 months; full systems implementation within 18 months.

Update

A single system for inspectors to refer to at the point of inspection was available by May 2013, when its use was also made mandatory. This has been improved over the last 12 months, with more detailed information now directly available to inspectors about complaints received. Inspectors are required to confirm that they have checked the system as part of their inspection activity and this is periodically sampled and reported to the Operations Executive Board.

Processes

1. Processes in CIE/NBU/CAS should be audited by process specialists and redesigned to support the new regional structure. Lessons from this case and others should be used to build better ways of working.

Action: Chief Operating Officer; audit complete by April 2013; urgent improvements by September 2013; full implementation by January 2014.

Update

An audit was carried out by process specialists by April 2013. This resulted in detailed plans for improvements, with urgent changes made as planned by September 2013. The remainder of the actions were met by February 2014, when regulatory inspection was regionalised.

2. Case management should be introduced with one clear owner who oversees all aspects of a case to completion within an end-to-end process. Escalation and required action should be clearly set out.

Action: Deputy Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance; implementation by September 2013.

Update

Changes to case management arrangements were introduced in Complaints Against Schools (CAS) and Compliance, Investigation Enforcement (CIE) teams by September 2013. There are clear responsibilities and processes for the initial assessment of complaints information when it is received and for allocation should the case meet the relevant threshold for investigation by Ofsted. There are clear protocols setting out escalation and ownership responsibilities. Staff are clear that, once a case has been passed to a Regulatory Inspector for investigation, it cannot be passed back to the central assessment team.

3. Directors and senior leaders should make sure that they have appropriate systems in place to ensure that their intentions are followed through. Meeting minutes and action logs should be used routinely when important matters are discussed.

Action: Chief Operating Officer, by September 2013.

Update

Records are kept of all actions agreed in management team meetings and these are followed up as necessary. Governance arrangements are regularly audited as part of the internal audit programme.

Personnel

1. Appropriate follow-up action should take place in accordance with Ofsted's HR policies, including disciplinary policies, where the review has identified that the staff concerned failed to act appropriately.

Action: Deputy Director, People; immediate.

Update

Appropriate action has been taken to address any individual shortcomings identified as a result of the review. In addition, HR policies and processes have been reviewed to ensure individuals are aware of their responsibilities and held accountable.

2. All social care staff, CIE staff, CAS staff, CAO staff and those who handle correspondence/calls to Ofsted, should be retrained in safeguarding matters and disability awareness.

3. Senior managers and inspectors should be made aware of the failings in this case and the lessons to be learnt. This involves all SHMI and HMI.

Action: Deputy Director, Social Care; by December 2013.

Update

Safeguarding training, which includes disability awareness, is being rolled out across Ofsted, with training mandatory for all inspectors, CIE, CAS and CAO staff to ensure they are encouraged, and are able, to use their judgement in relation to these matters. Senior managers have all received a detailed briefing on the learning from this internal review.

4. Knowledge transfer should be strengthened to ensure that key risks are formally identified before people leave. High risk posts, such as those relating to safeguarding, should have clear and detailed handover arrangements managed through a comprehensive leavers' process.

Action: Deputy Director, People; by September 2013.

Update

The current leaver's process has been bolstered by the inclusion of steps relating specifically to knowledge transfer. New documentation has been produced with guidance on conducting a successful handover on departure from Ofsted.

5. A learning and development programme should be put in place to strengthen practice.

Action: Deputy Director, People; by September 2013.

Update

Implementation of a new, two-day safeguarding training programme for all inspection staff is ongoing. Our contracted inspectors will also undertake the training, which will be completed by September 2014. We are replacing our online mandatory safeguarding module to reflect the recommendations of the report.

Quality Assurance

1. Quality assurance should be part of the managerial line. This will strengthen ownership and accountability and will make poor performance more transparent. Quality assurance should include the quality of inspections, inspectors and inspection reports.
2. Managers should routinely sample the quality of inspection work, checking files, looking at the evidence base and through discussion in one to ones.

Consistently weak performers should be identified and additional QA put in place to ensure inspection judgements are secure.

Action: Director, Schools, by December 2013.

Update

Quality assurance has been moved into the regional management line for all inspection remits. Managers are required to routinely check the quality of the work of HMI and regulatory inspectors in their teams, with additional checks and action in place for any weaker performers.

Corporate

1. The cross-Ofsted Safeguarding Group should be re-established and led by the Director, Social Care. The detailed knowledge of a social care professional in relation to the safeguarding and child protection issues emerging in any setting, any remit, and any region should be used to improve practice. The Group should report to the Chief Inspector every six months with its action plan and work audited as part of the annual audit plan, and reported to the Audit Committee.

Action: Chief Operating Officer; by September 2013.

Update

The cross-Ofsted Safeguarding Group was re-established under the Director, Social Care in 2013. The group meets monthly and is responsible for oversight of policy and practice relating to safeguarding and child protection matters across Ofsted's remit and for identifying any issues that emerge to ensure they are addressed and learnt from.

The Safeguarding Group reports to the Ofsted Executive Board and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector on its work and plans. We are ensuring the audit plan includes consideration of safeguarding work. The forthcoming audit plan includes an audit of the improvements we made to Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement processes over the last year and the new Social Care information systems we are introducing in the year ahead.

Ensuring secure practice

1. Where concerns have been raised with Ofsted, cases for the last two years should be reviewed across Social Care, Early Years, Complaints and legal services teams to ensure that other safeguarding matters have been properly handled, referred to the DfE where appropriate and followed up. Action will then be taken as a result of any cases giving cause for concern.

Action: Chief Operating Officer, by June 2013.

Update

A review was undertaken in Spring 2013 of all Social Care, Early Years and Complaints about Schools cases for the last two years to ensure they had been properly handled and followed up. Action was taken where it was identified that further work, including inspection activity, was required.

2. All cases where Serious Incident Briefings have been produced should be reviewed (January 2010 onwards) to ensure appropriate action has been/is being taken and, where this is not the case, followed up as a priority. An interim process to ensure consistency and collation of information across remits should be urgently established.

Action: Advisor, Safeguarding by August 2013.

Update

A review of cases was completed. For any case where further action by Ofsted was identified as required, priority was given to that action and progress was monitored. All identified actions have been completed. Processes have been put in place to ensure consistency and collation of information across remits.

3. Clear processes and guidance relating to Serious Incident Briefings (SIBs) need to be put in place to ensure clarity of what should happen when one is produced and to establish accountability for directing subsequent action. Action and learning arising should be overseen by the Safeguarding Group.

Action: Adviser, Safeguarding, by June 2013.

Update

The format of SIBs has been revised and the SIB protocol has been published. The revised SIB proforma clearly identifies the action taken or to be taken and identifies the management responsibilities for the action. Regular reports on progress, issues and trends are scheduled to be brought to Safeguarding Group.

Performance management

1. Roles and responsibilities need to be much sharper. The specific responsibilities of operational leads in terms of quality need to be explicitly stated. The current approach of individual Performance and Development Plans needs to be reviewed to ensure we are systematically joining up individual accountabilities to see where the gaps are. Escalation between roles needs to be made explicit and documented so we can always answer the question 'who is accountable for this'.

Action: Deputy Director, People, by October 2013.

Update

The new regional structure, new SCRI role with higher levels of accountability and the new Regulation Inspection Manager (RIM) role will bring a greater level of managerial overview at a local level. This results in more robust scrutiny of individual inspector performance as well provider performance. Issues are escalated quickly and clearly through the management line.

Relationships

1. The relationship with the DfE in this area should be more structured and business like. Consideration should be given to setting out expectations in a clear protocol or memorandum of understanding including the roles and responsibilities of both parties. There should be regular and formal senior level meetings to discuss regulated services, with minutes and formal reports back to HMCI.

Action: Divisional Manager, Education Policy and Frameworks.

Update

A Memorandum of understanding has been agreed with the DfE in relation to the delivery of inspections of independent schools. This sets out Ofsted and the DfE's responsibilities and how these will be fulfilled.

There is a formal Independent schools working group meeting between Ofsted and DfE that meets on a monthly basis. Independent schools are also part of the remit of the Ofsted/DfE Schools Liaison Group Keep In Touch (KIT) meeting. Both of these groups are part of the agreed structure of meetings that feed into the main DfE/Ofsted KIT.

2. The system for making referrals to the LADO/Local Authority should be reviewed to ensure that it is sufficiently robust. Where gaps in the system have been identified in this report they should be addressed so that serious issues are appropriately dealt with. This would include the role of the LADO, which excludes child on child abuse. In addition, for cases where Ofsted is not satisfied with the response from the LADO, a process should be agreed whereby concerns of a child protection or safeguarding nature can be escalated immediately to the Director of Children's Services for that Authority.

Action: Deputy Director, Social Care; by December 2013.

Update

Mandatory safeguarding for all staff is being rolled out. This includes a review of the role and responsibility of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and escalation routes where Ofsted is not satisfied with the response of a LADO or a local authority safeguarding team to any concerns Ofsted refers. Case sampling and review through regional structures ensures effectiveness.

3. Information sharing protocols between Ofsted and the Police should be put in place.

Action: Deputy Director, Social Care; by December 2013.

Update

In March 2013, Ofsted agreed the Joint Protocol: *Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) disclosing details on their register of children's homes with local authorities, the police, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Secretary of State for Education*. The protocol was published in April 2013 and is publicly available on the DfE website. This allows Ofsted to share information about children's homes with a wider range of named public authorities including the Chief Officers of local police forces.

Work is ongoing to establish a broader protocol with the police to enable wider information sharing at a national level. In the interim, Regulation Inspection Managers have developed links with local police forces and regularly exchange information.

Frameworks

1. A review of the safeguarding aspects of all our current frameworks should be undertaken to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the light of this case. Consideration should be given to having less prescriptive guidance and more emphasis on encouraging inspectors to use their judgement. Training needs to take place to ensure that the lessons here are understood in practice.

Action: Divisional Manager, Education Policy and Frameworks.

Update

Each inspection framework is being reviewed to ensure safeguarding aspects are fit for purpose. This is being overseen by the Safeguarding Group. Safeguarding training is being rolled out across Ofsted, with training mandatory for all inspectors to ensure they are encouraged, and are able, to use their judgement in relation to these matters.