



**Edward Timpson MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Sylvia Tidy  
Lead Member for Children's Services  
East Sussex County Council

Mr Ged Rowney  
Interim Director of Children's Services  
East Sussex County Council

16 December 2013

Dear Sylvia and Ged,

Dear Sylvia and Ged,

I am writing to express my serious concerns over the failures in safeguarding at the East Sussex School which have been set out in a Serious Case Review (SCR) into child G published today. For a school so comprehensively to fail to protect a vulnerable teenager from a manipulative adult, who has been placed by the school in a position of trust, is an abrogation of leadership and responsibility which had terrible consequences for this child and the family.

The SCR reveals systemic flaws in child protection at the school, amid a culture which repeatedly ignored inappropriate adult behaviour, while blaming the child and offering unsuitable advice to her. The way that school leaders dismissed warnings made by young people about an improper relationship, and the failure to provide any effective support to the child, is inexcusable.

I concur with the conclusion of the SCR author that 'some of the failings identified in this SCR are both significant and systemic'; a finding substantially at odds with the conclusions of a 'safeguarding review' of the school led by your own officials earlier this year.


I am aware that the school has begun to implement changes to tackle the failures identified in the serious case review. It is important that students and parents can be confident that those failures have been addressed and all necessary action taken. As the accountable people, at officer and political level, for safeguarding in East Sussex, I am writing to you to ask what steps you have taken to assure yourself that the safeguarding practice in the school has significantly improved. I ask, in particular, that you provide

answers to the following questions:

- What have you done to assess the school's view that safeguarding systems in the school are now effective and secure?
- How do you know that procedures are now being followed, and children listened to?
- What steps have you taken to assure yourselves that the training undertaken by members of the school staff and senior management team has been effective?
- What understanding does the school now have of the correct use of the Common Assessment Framework, now known as early help assessments?
- Is this a case in which the local authority should issue a performance standards and warning notice under section 60 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006?
- The school Chair of Governors commissioned an enquiry into whether action should be taken under the school's disciplinary procedures in relation to the decision to make child protection records retrospectively, and supply them to the serious case review as if they were contemporaneous: has any action been taken and if so what?

This final question is particularly critical. I am certain that you, along with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Diocese of Chichester will want to reassure yourselves, and offer reassurance to parents and children at the school, that child protection systems are effective, that the school listens to and supports its pupils, and understands its statutory responsibilities to promote their welfare. You and the school governors will also want to demonstrate that the school leadership has taken due responsibility for these extremely serious failings and put appropriate corrective actions in place.

I remind you of the powers of the Secretary of State to intervene directly in the governance of schools; and I expressly reserve those powers, in this case, while I await your swift responses to the questions above.

Yours sincerely,  


**Edward Timpson MP**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families**

Copied to Mr D Jeffries (Chair of Governors), Colin Perkins (Diocese of Chichester), Cathie Pattison (LSCB Chair), Keith Glazier (Leader, ESCC) and Becky Shaw (Chief Executive, ESCC)

