

External review of safeguarding – November 2021

Summary

The purpose of the external review was

- To understand the culture of safeguarding within the school
- To ensure statutory compliance
- To understand a student perspective on safeguarding (online safety, bullying and response to bullying, how the school supports them keeping themselves safe)
- To assess the effectiveness of Leadership of safeguarding
- To examine how well the school manages relationships with external agencies such as Police and Children's social care

During the visit the consultant spoke to groups of students from in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9), Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) and the Sixth Form. Fifteen members of staff were interviewed during the visit and the consultant spent time observing behaviour at lunchtime around the school. He also spoke to many students during lunchtime, on a more informal basis, about their experiences of school. Prior to the visit a thorough review of policy and procedures was undertaken.

Findings

Culture

There have been significant changes put into place since September 2021, including a new behaviour policy and systems, and a complete overhaul of the safeguarding staffing structure, safeguarding systems and processes. It was very clear from talking to Leaders and the staff, that these new systems and structures were welcomed and were already having a positive impact.

Statutory compliance

The newly written safeguarding policy is compliant with the current statutory guidance and is well understood by staff. The single central register of required pre-employment safeguarding checks for staff is compliant. Members of staff are trained appropriately for their role and records show that all staff have received the recommended frequency and depth of training. There are some further refinements that the school can make to record the safeguarding training that has been completed and in how the school records background checks of contractors who are regular visitors to the school.

Student feedback

When asked if they felt safe at school all students said they did. Older students, who have had a longer history with the school recognised that there have been significant improvements in safety recently. They also reported that there were less fights and 'rushing' incidents. They recognised that although bullying is reduced it is still a problem but that new procedures has meant that it is dealt with more quickly. Students had a good understanding of safeguarding issues and a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe and who to report concerns to. They enjoyed PSHE lessons where many 'hot topics' are taught and discussed. Some of the students spoke about the recent focus on harmful sexual behaviours and felt that coverage of this should be introduced a little earlier into year 8.

Leadership of safeguarding

The Vice Principal and her team have been successful in implementing a range of new policies and procedures to ensure that safeguarding is at the top of the agenda and that there is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. The consultant found good evidence of

positive impact and agreed with the school evaluation that there is now a need to ensure consistency of practice following such a period of quick growth and improvement. The report concluded that 'safeguarding at Stantonbury is improving, it is well managed and the culture is developing with clear systems in place'.

Relationships with external agencies

It was recognised in the report that relationships with external agencies such as Children's Social Care, the multi-agency safeguarding hub and the Local Authority Designated Officer have greatly improved which has had a direct impact on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school. There are clear systems of communication between the school and the relevant external agency and staff are confident of when they should make a referral.