

Topics:

- the annual LA Safeguarding Audit, led by Gill Dunlop, Pupil and School Support Service Manager at BFfC and Fiona Hostler, Safeguarding issues to consider re #EveryonesInvited
- the governors' role in monitoring and supporting wellbeing and good mental health in your schools
- any recent COVID-19/risk assessment issues which are causing concern to governors.

Hosted by RGA

Matt Espley - Lead

Hazel Archer- admin/support

Presentations:

Fiona Hostler BFfC – Safeguarding and CME Officer – Safeguarding Audit.

Julia Cottee RGA

Gill Dunlop BFfC – Pupil and Schools Service Manager provided additional advice and answered questions from governors.

Safeguarding Audit – Fiona Hostler

FH shared the Audit on screen, talked to the slides and explained key points.

The NSPCC will be revising the audit tool shortly; the local steering group, which includes GD, will be checking to ensure the local audit has covered the relevant points and is up to date. The old tool won't be available after this time, but this will be explained to schools so they have their previous audits saved.

Findings of the audit helped to show where there are gaps in schools. Where there were concerns these were in a low number of schools. More than 85% of schools met all requirements. The report is awaiting ratification, but it can be seen already that clear improvements have been made in in one year.

Q – what is still unresolved?

A – the main areas where there are gaps are:

- work experience
- fabricated illness
- intimate care
- supporting families, culture and communities.

Intimate care is mostly carried out in Special Schools so training not required for the majority of schools. Also, work experience is not relevant to all.

Q –The baseline was 2019 pre-covid, was this considered in the audit?

A – the audit questionnaire was sent out in Oct 2020; it's hard to know for certain if Covid affected any areas, but most of the audit issues wouldn't be affected by Covid. Incidentally, Covid has brought up other issues such as children being out of the country, and unable to return to school due to travel restrictions imposed after they left.

Across West Berkshire, Wokingham and Reading the audit results were very similar.

Q – It was a statutory requirement for schools to report to BFfC – is there a requirement for schools to involve/report back to governors?

A – The HT/Safeguarding lead should do it in partnership with Safeguarding governor, this was a strong recommendation to Headteachers. It might have been harder to do this because it was an online audit, but the expectation was that governors should be involved. The BFfC audit last year was hard copy and had options to indicate progress and a requirement to describe evidence, the NSPCC audit doesn't have this option.

Comment – The older, BFfC audit was more in-depth; any governors who are concerned about safeguarding in their schools should look at this also. GD confirmed that it is still available if needed, and on request.

Q – will the audit be carried out at the same time next year?

A – Yes

N.B. Fiona's presentation will be updated with any points arising from the NSPCC changes, and expanded to include areas discussed by this group. Once the updated version has been shared at the RBC/BFfC Governors Briefing on 29th April it will be uploaded to the RGA website.

Further safeguarding issues:

Nothing yet has come from DfE officially about their response to allegations raised by Everyone's Invited. Meanwhile staff in schools should be vigilant and listen to what children are saying, check out appropriately, professional watchfulness.

Q – Are current school policies deficient in this respect, any gaps?

A – No, potential issues are covered by various standard policies such as Working Together and Keeping Children Safe in Education. Whilst these allegations are serious and have received publicity, they are not significantly different from other safeguarding issues. There are no Reading model safeguarding policies, as a decision was made that individual school policies should suit each specific school community. The Key has some model policies, but if schools use these they must adapt them to make sure that they are relevant.

Q – What is being done to address gaps in the Culture and Communities area?

A – BFfC School Standards team are looking at anti-racist and PSHE curriculum and are part of a working group scrutinising these. Mo Galway will present outcomes at a future RGA meeting.

Reading schools are very familiar with how RBC and BFfC procedures work, the multi-agency approach works well; schools know who to refer to.

Q – Is there a robust reporting model for racist incidents?

A – School Standards are working closely with RISC (Reading International Solidarity Centre) to look at curriculum, as for the above question.

Comment – Allegations of sexual assault are not just a Secondary school issue. It is rare in Primary but does happen, and is taken very seriously. The approach in dealing with such allegations must be sensitive and appropriate.

There is not a lot of feedback or reporting on this issue in Reading at present. The active and excellent Youth Council will help to ensure that any issues are attended to and escalated.

Julia Cottee – Role of the Wellbeing Governor

The presentation was shared on screen – focus on staff wellbeing. A lot of information will be shared on RGA website; this purpose of the event tonight is to signpost and draw governors' attention to issues.

It is important that governors can see that signposts to helplines etc are in place at their schools.

JC shared a presentation from Governors for Schools and The Key, including more detail on how governors can do things to support their school leadership.

Discussion – It is important not to add to the burden on staff and SLT by asking lots of questions about wellbeing. Different schools do it in different ways, the important thing is that something happens and this is what governors should ask about, being careful to think strategically.

Staff surveys and exit interviews can be useful tools

Q – Do you have to have a Wellbeing governor?

A – No, it's a suggestion, and does have some drawbacks such as individual governors' capacity. It's important that governors keep Wellbeing on the agenda and record it. Some schools have it as a standing item on their FGB meeting agendas, some include it as an area expected to be covered by governors in a link role, for instance.

It's important for governors to keep discussions and questions about Wellbeing at a strategic level, and there are documents on the RGA website to help.

Attendees did not raise any other safeguarding issues for discussion.

These notes and the resources shared at the meeting have been uploaded to the RGA website (www.therga.org.uk/rga-resources).