

Executive Summary

Haringey School Safeguarding Review – Highgate School

Report Authors

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Purpose of the Report

To advise the Director of Children's Services of the findings of the review into Safeguarding at Highgate School,

Background and Context

In March 2021, the Everyone's Invited (EI) Website received many testimonies from current and former pupils alleging abuse, misogyny, and sexual harassment in UK schools. Some of these testimonies concerned a Haringey School, Highgate, a high-achieving Independent School catering for approximately 1890 pupils aged from 3 to 19. By April, Highgate had also been contacted directly by current and former pupils, mostly via Highgate Testimonies (HT), who also made allegations regarding Highgate.

Due to the number and nature of the EI allegations in general and the concerns raised the UK government asked Ofsted to carry out a rapid review of sexual abuse in English schools and colleges. That review was published in June 2021.

In Haringey, after discussion between the Director of Children's Services (DCS), the Haringey Education Partnership (HEP) and the Haringey Safeguarding Childrens Partnership (HSCP), a local review of schools in the borough was commissioned. It was agreed, in consultation with the Head, that Highgate School would be the first school to be reviewed (partially due to their internal response to EI and HT and their commissioning of their own review Highgate School were in the best position to respond quickly to the LA review). Highgate responded positively to being reviewed. The findings of each individual school review were to be reported to the DCS. This report presents the findings and recommendations from the review of Highgate School.

Methodology and Scope of Review

This review was a thorough assessment of the school's safeguarding ability and considered strategy, operations, policy, procedure, PSHE, RSE and Staying Safe curricula, culture and practice, recruitment, and their response to EI and HT. The review took a detailed and broad view and considered the school's strengths and development areas. Key was to try and develop a clearer understanding of the presence, issues, scale, and nature, of any peer-on-peer abuse in the school and work with the school and its governing body to help them with their improvement journey. To ascertain a detailed understanding of

the school and the issues we:

- Visited the school several times.
- Read and fully considered all EI and HTs allegations/testimonies.
- Conducted a detailed moderation by the authors.
- Read and fully considered documentary evidence (school records, safeguarding and other related policies etc).
- Held discussions with governors, senior leaders, and staff
- Conducted Focus groups with 12 groups of pupils and parents.
- Triangulated all information against the policies, feedback from parents and students and our own observations
- Ensured draft reports were consulted upon to check accuracy.
- Agreed a timeline for the conduct of review (and report), from June (Schools visits and evidence gathering) and concluded in October.

The review considered:

- whether the school approach to safeguarding was a “*whole school approach*”.
- the schools response regarding prevention (including PSHE and RSE curriculum and if these helped pupils to have appropriate, safe, relationships)
- the culture and “climate” (discourse, relationships, respect, open debate, behaviours etc) in the school
- whether a pro-social modelling approach is constantly demonstrated by staff setting a good, clear example and
- whether challenge, support, sanction, and communication are clearly evident when inappropriate or criminal behaviour has occurred/ been reported.

A key issue in both the EI and HT testimonies revealed that a very large proportion of incidents occurred outside, rather than inside, the school. These were mostly at parties and often after alcohol and/or drugs were consumed. These are complex, nuanced issues, with various legal concerns and considerations. They are often very difficult to deal with and can prove challenging for schools (as the Ofsted report commented). These situations and issues appear to be the key alleged safeguarding concern in schools at the present and consequently were a crucial factor for this review.

Finding and Conclusion

Key to this review was checking whether Highgate School is safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils. The allegations in EI and HT suggested this was not the case, some current and former pupils alleging abuse and negative experiences (from rape to sexism and sexist insults), feeling unsafe and believing that their concerns were either not adequately dealt with or that they were not supported sufficiently to report incidents.

However, there is a lot of evidence to refute much of what has been stated in the testimonies: evidence provided by the school, and to a significant degree by parents and pupils, (many who said they did not recognise the school they know, and have experience of, from the testimonies), gives a different impression of the school and how situations were handled. Whilst Highgate School's safeguarding arrangements (like those of very many schools, as evidenced by the Ofsted review) may not always have been as effective as possible they met the expected requirements.

Based on the evidence, the review found that Highgate School was currently fully compliant with statutory requirements. There were some issues found the need for policies to be updated to reflect the wider changes and societal, cultural development but no systemic practices that placed children and young people at risk. Further, the school leadership are fully aware of their development areas and have plans in place to enhance and improve their responses to a face changing context for children and young people. It was noted that when moderating Highgate School's self-assessment grades, the school and the authors largely concurred. The Head and his team recognise and understand the issues and are working hard to improve and ensure there is exemplary practice in place for keeping pupils safe. As a result, there are many developments underway designed to ensure that the school becomes stronger in their safeguarding responses. An example of good practice is that the school, with the involvement of pupils, has drafted the Anti-Sexism and Sexual Violence (ASV) Plan. The school appears to be actively trying to promote healthy and positive relationships, gender equality and acceptance of difference.

The review noted that sexual abuse and harassment in schools (and out of schools) reflect wider societal issues and problems and current cultural discourse and there are no quick and/or easy answers. These societal issues are complex, multi-faceted, ones and will require complex, multi-faceted solution, to help remedy the situation. What is clear is that this is not a problem unique to any one school, or even schools in general but is rather a social one requiring a collective response. This is what Ofsted found and it is evidenced by what we found (indeed the vast majority of parents spoken to saw it as a societal issue and one they noted the school could only do so much about).

However, schools can, and should, work with safeguarding partners and play a pivotal role in being part of the solution. Highgate understands this and is very willing to work with safeguarding partners and other stakeholders, including pupils and parents.

Recommendations

The school should:

- Update and bolster the Code of Conduct which sets out general principles of behaviour that pupils are expected to apply at school.
- Work with LBoH in order that all staff who need it undertake any further Safeguarding training, e.g. more level 3, required.
- Review and restructure all policies to make them more succinct and accessible and form a

full safeguarding suite.

- The Haringey Children's Safeguarding partners should consider coordinating exemplars from other schools and institutions and share these across all Haringey based schools as models of strong practice.
- Ensure more attention is paid to ensuring that policies are very clearly delineated from procedures.
- Ensure strategy, operations, tactics, and culture are clearly and strongly linked and reflected in policies and procedure which must be firmly embedded in practice.
- Build the further capacity in the safeguarding team as planned, and review clarity of structures and accountability ensuring a dedicated DSL with a safeguarding background remains on the Highgate School Senior Team.
- Continue the review and development of PSHE, RSE and Staying Safe curricula and ensure the:
 - detailing of the online safety curriculum for all age groups
 - development of an overview of all aspects of the stay safe curriculum to identify gaps and performance management and quality assurance issues/areas for improvement
 - reviewing of time and delivery models across all phases to ensure sufficient time is given to fully cover the planned content.
 - engage pupils more in the development of PSHE/RSE/SS
- Continue to review and develop contact with parents so they feel able to share information and seek advice.

Continue to develop and improve pupil engagement, consultation, and participation. Develop more and better systems to seek the involvement of pupils and develop pupil engagement and participation.
- Conduct a piece of research with pupils in the senior school regarding the "no snitch culture" and consider how to develop more Restorative Justice practices in the senior school (similar to the approach in the junior school).
- Increase and broaden the ways the school's raise parental awareness of peer-on-peer abuse, online safety and the school's approach teaching their children how to keep themselves safe, in and out of school, including when they are online.
- Continue to develop links with partners, this should include further involvement of the Police and Lighthouse in making presentations to staff and pupils.
- Continue to develop and improve links with other schools and school partnerships such as HEP.
- Improve links the HSCP and ensure that a copy of the annual Safeguarding Audit is sent to HSCP via HEP.
- Further develop, improve, and simplify the procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns within school.
- Further develop training and monitoring of implementation ensuring a comprehensive strategic and contextualised training plan is developed and implemented and its results monitored. As part of this ensure that the messages from training and policy and procedure are very strongly inculcated

in staff, parents and pupils and form the basic culture of the school.

Paul Sutton & Angela Corbett

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