

SAFE RECRUITMENT IN SCHOOLS UPDATE

To: **Audit and Accounts Committee**

Date: **9th NOVEMBER 2015**

From: **Keith Grimwade, Service Director: Learning**

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a. provide a progress update on the suggestion to introduce a systematic checking system in maintained schools.
- b. provide information on the number of staff (both teachers, ancillary staff and governors) trained in safe recruitment practice.
- c. to provide details of the responses received from academy schools regarding their compliance with safeguarding recruitment policies as requested in the minutes of the Audit and Accounts Committee of 22nd September.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Every year since 2004 Children's Services has commissioned the County Council's Internal Audit team to undertake a review of safer recruitment practice in a sample of Cambridgeshire schools.
- 2.2 In 2011/2012 we were pleased to report that the auditors had awarded schools an overall rating of 'substantial assurance' for the first time since the audits began. However, this progress was not maintained in either of the two subsequent years, with an overall rating of 'moderate assurance' being reported.
- 2.3 In 2013/14 the Learning Directorate took a range of additional actions, which were reported to the Audit and Accounts Committee on 22nd September. The Committee requested some additional information and an update on some suggested actions.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Since the Committee's meeting on 22nd September, the 2014/15 report has been published by LGSS Audit & Risk Management Service. The main report, recommendations and the management agreed actions have been circulated to members separately.
- 3.2 The overall assurance level for 2014/15 was 'Moderate'. Whilst it is encouraging to note that there has been some improvement in the number of schools given substantial assurance, an increase of 7% compared to last year's audit, this is clearly not the assurance level that we aspire to.

- 3.3 The Executive Director for Children, Families and Adults has written to all maintained schools and academies, summarising the findings and setting out clearly the actions that schools should take, which is attached as Appendix 1.

4.0 PROGRESS, ACTIONS AND UPDATE

- 4.1 Audit and Accounts Committee requested an update on the suggestion to introduce a systematic checking system in maintained schools.
- 4.1.1 Education Advisers are carrying out Safeguarding Audits in all maintained schools; a pro forma has been developed and is attached as Appendix 2. The visit takes approximately three hours and includes an interview with the headteacher and the person responsible for maintaining the school's Single Central Record.
- 4.1.2 During the visit the Single Central Record (SCR) is checked to ensure that it is completed correctly and that all adults working in the school and those volunteers who are in 'regulated activities' are entered onto the SCR. Policies and procedures are checked and a written report is provided following the visit.
- 4.1.3 A model Single Central Record has also been sent to all maintained schools and academies.
- 4.1.4 Schools have been prioritised for these audits, commencing with those judged as Requires Improvement, and moving on to those schools judged as good but due an inspection. Other schools will be visited during the course of the academic year.
- 4.1.5 All maintained primary schools have a Keeping in Touch visit this term and these will have a special focus on Safeguarding, so that should there be any major problems they will be prioritised for the more in-depth visit carried out by the Education Advisers.
- 4.1.6 Primary and Secondary Academies have the option of purchasing a Safeguarding Audit at a cost of £450.
- 4.2 Audit and Accounts Committee requested information on the number of staff (both teachers, ancillary staff and governors) trained in safe recruitment practice:
- 4.2.1 All maintained schools and academies have a designated senior person who has lead responsibility for child protection in the school and has undertaken, as a minimum, the 2 day child protection training course run by The Education Child Protection Service.
- 4.2.2 In 2014/15 119 staff from 75 schools were trained in Safer Recruitment and 55 staff from 39 schools attended Refresher Safer Recruitment Practice.
- 4.2.3 In 2013/14 61 staff from 39 schools were trained in Safer Recruitment and 18 staff from 15 schools attended Refresher Safer Recruitment Practice.
- 4.3 Audit and Accounts Committee requested details of the responses received from academy schools regarding their compliance with safeguarding recruitment policies:
- 4.3.1 The annual Child Protection Audit, which all academies are invited to complete and return, asks two questions about safer recruitment:

- Have all selection panels had at least one trained member sitting on it?
- Is there information recorded on the Single Central Record for all staff regarding their eligibility to work in the UK?

4.3.2 The absolute deadline for returns is the end of November. To date 21 out of 30 secondary academies and 27 out of 34 primary academies have returned the audit; all have answered 'yes' to both questions.

5.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

5.1 Audit and Accounts Committee will be interested to know that Ofsted has given a higher profile in the new Common Inspection Framework to Safeguarding.

5.2 Para 47 of the Schools Inspection Handbook states, 'Inspectors will always have regard for how well children and learners are helped and protected so that they are kept safe. Although inspectors will not provide a separate grade for this key aspect of a provider's work, inspectors will always make a written judgement under leadership and management in the report about whether or not the arrangements for safeguarding children and learners are effective'.

5.3 The inspection reports of maintained schools and academies are monitored by the Learning Directorate and any concerns are followed up as a matter of urgency.

5.4 Audit and Accounts Committee will also be interested to know that the DfE has clarified the role of LA's with regards to academies and safeguarding in 'Schools Causing Concern, 2015', namely: 'Where a local authority has concerns about an academy's safeguarding arrangements or procedures (arising as a result of investigations about individual children or otherwise), these concerns should be reported to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) who have responsibility to take any necessary improvement action and to monitor the situation'.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Audit and Accounts Committee is asked to note and to comment on this report.