



NSPCC Safeguarding Report

Goldington Academy, Bedford

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1 - Introduction

Goldington Academy, an 11-16 academy in Bedford, prioritises an encouraging and high-expectation environment, viewing education as a partnership involving teachers, pupils, and parents. The academy's successful track record in personal development, academics, and extracurricular activities reflects its commitment to cultivating confident, successful adults who contribute meaningfully to the community.

With less than 900 pupils, Goldington Academy maintains a 'small school' ambiance while offering substantial resources. The academy focuses on engaging students through consistent, high-quality teaching. The academy places students at the core of its mission, promoting personal growth alongside academic progress. The inclusive extracurricular program spans sports, academics, specialist skills, and the arts, offering diverse experiences. Emphasising partnership in education, the academy ensures transparent and frequent communication with parents, fostering collective support for students' learning and transition into adulthood.

2 - Objectives

2.1 Activities undertaken

Prior to the visit to Goldington Academy, a review of the academy's website aimed to evaluate its commitment to safeguarding and gather essential information for the upcoming visit. At the time of the visit, the academy, in collaboration with the NSPCC, was in the process of ensuring that its safeguarding policy meets compliance standards.

During the on-site visit, interviews were conducted with various staff members, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), the Linked Safeguarding Governor, and other teaching and support staff. Additionally, crucial insights were gathered through conversations with a group of students, providing diverse perspectives for the review process.

To understand the academy's infrastructure and facilities, a brief premises tour was conducted.

3 - Site security, physical environment, visitor information

3.1 Access to the Site

Vehicle access at Goldington Academy is managed through the main reception, ensuring controlled entry. The presence of CCTV further enhances security, as it covers the main entrances, providing surveillance and monitoring capabilities.

3.2 Visitors

The welcoming and signing-in process for visitors at the academy is a robust system designed to ensure safety and security. Upon arrival, visitors undergo ID and DBS checks, with specific procedures in place for both DBS and non-DBS individuals. The identification process includes the provision of a lanyard with a photo ID for clear identification.

To convey expectations to visitors, a leaflet outlining visitor guidelines, including rules concerning the use of mobile phones, is provided. This proactive approach aids in maintaining a secure environment. Safeguarding information is prominently displayed in the Reception Area, and this information is reinforced through the inventory system, contributing to an environment where safety protocols are clear and accessible.

The Reception Area itself is secured from the rest of the academy, adding an additional layer of security to the overall process. The management of the reception process is efficiently handled, ensuring that procedures are not only safe but also secure.

3.3 Staff access

Staff at Goldington Academy access the building through the main reception, utilising the inventory system to sign in upon arrival. This centralised process ensures a clear record of staff presence within the premises.

3.4 Academy environment

The brief tour of Goldington Academy provided an overview of various areas within the academy environment. The design of the building is based on a good-sized site that is easy to navigate. Displays throughout the academy are well-maintained, reflecting the pride that both students and staff take in their academy and surroundings.

The academy boasts extensive outdoor space, including facilities like a multi-use games area, contributing to a well-kept and organised outdoor environment. While the large field provides opportunities for student activities, close management ensures that certain areas are off-limits when necessary to ensure safety.

CCTV systems are in place across the site, this has recently been updated and enhanced. The overall maintenance of the academy is commendable, with cleanliness and upkeep evident throughout the premises.

Beginning and end-of-day routines are well-established, fostering a sense of order and safety. Both staff and students are fully aware of expectations, contributing to well-organised and secure transitions.

Recommendations and suggestions

- *Consider the use of a generic email that can be used in place of the individual staff emails to ensure that if staff absence is an issue it can be mitigated against.*
- *Build on the current resources available of the website so that the area becomes a useful resource for parents and other stakeholders. Consider using as a bank or resources covering a range of topics, with special consideration to those topics identified as pertinent to the academy community.*
- *Consider a student friendly safeguarding policy alongside the one available on the website.*
- *Review the fencing around the perimeter of the academy. Currently there is a reliance on local residents to ensure that their fencing is suitable. By installing school fencing this can be maintained and monitored by the academy.*

- › Consider how you highlight initiatives such as the lanyard system to ensure that the children and staff feel confident in challenging visitors when required.

4 - Leadership and management of safeguarding

4.1 Safeguarding management structure

Goldington Academy is well-equipped with a robust support system designed to prioritise the well-being and safeguarding of its students.

In terms of safeguarding leadership, the academy has a dedicated Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs, with both teaching and non-teaching capacities, including roles as Heads of Year (HoY). The Deputy DSL has a teaching commitment, and the DSL holds the position of Pastoral Assistant Headteacher, also with a teaching commitment. Additionally, the Head Teacher is trained as a DSL, adding capacity when needed.

The pastoral structure within the academy plays a vital role in supporting students. This includes the Assistant Head, Heads of Year, form tutors, and a broader pastoral team that comprises a non-teaching pastoral mentor and a non-teaching Mental Health Lead. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is also an integral part of this support network.

Regular meetings contribute to the collaborative efforts of the safeguarding and pastoral teams. A weekly pastoral/safeguarding meeting involves the entire team, while a half-termly all-staff meeting facilitates ongoing safeguarding training. Additionally, Learning Support Assistants (LSA) benefit from weekly meetings led by the SENCO and informed by the safeguarding team, ensuring comprehensive support and coordination across the entire academy community.

4.2 DSL/DDSL Training

The DSL and Deputy DSL have actively pursued relevant training in the past two years, this training is reported to the governing body on a regular basis, and records diligently maintained. Alongside training, the DSL and DDSL keep abreast of changes through e-bulletins, including those from the NSPCC, and participates in regular training reviews.

Establishing good relationships with the Local Authority (LA) has been a priority. This engagement is vital for fostering collaboration and ensuring that local training opportunities are leveraged to strengthen links with the Local Authority and Children's Services.

Looking ahead, identified future training needs include areas such as PREVENT, Electronic Personal Education Plans (E-PEP), and participation in forums held by the borough.

4.3 DSL Capacity

The DSL has a number of roles within the academy, extending beyond their safeguarding responsibilities. As outlined earlier, they hold the position of Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and maintains a teaching commitment. This dual role underscores the integral connection between safeguarding and pastoral care, emphasising the holistic support provided to students.

The DSL expressed satisfaction with the time allocated to be able to fulfil their role. However, there is a noted need for an additional pastoral mentor, as discussed in a previous report. Despite this resource gap, the DSL receives substantial support from a great link governor and finds the staff, including form tutors, to be helpful.

Similarly, the Deputy DSL echoes the sentiment of being busy but supportive of each other. The Heads of Year (HoY) and the medical team are identified as supportive resources, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the safeguarding team. This collaborative and supportive atmosphere reflects a commitment to ensuring the well-being and safeguarding of all members of the Goldington Academy community.

4.4 Supervision and support

While formal supervision is not currently in place for the DSL and DDSL, there are regular meetings organised. These meetings serve as a platform for discussions, addressing concerns, and ensuring that the safeguarding team remains cohesive and effective in their roles.

The presence of Mental Health Leads underscores a commitment to prioritising the mental well-being of staff. Additionally, a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is assigned the responsibility of overseeing staff well-being, indicating a proactive approach to addressing the broader well-being needs of the academy staff. The provision of private healthcare contributes to the comprehensive well-being support available.

4.5 Day to day management of safeguarding

The academy utilises an electronic system for reporting concerns, CPOMS, with occasional use of the "pink" form when staff encounter system access issues. CPOMS facilitates the systematic recording of concerns, ensuring a streamlined and efficient process for the safeguarding team.

All members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have access to all concerns through CPOMS. The DSL and Deputy DSL lead a triage process, guiding and informing the prioritisation of concerns based on their urgency and nature.

For out-of-hours concerns, including during holiday periods, a formal rota is established between the DSL, Deputy DSL, and SLT members. This rotation ensures that there is continuous coverage and responsiveness to safeguarding matters. Information about out-of-hours arrangements is shared with the Local Authority (LA) to facilitate coordinated responses.

In the event that parents or children need to report concerns, they are directed to contact the main office number. While this process is informal, it aims to ensure that concerns are promptly communicated to the relevant members of the safeguarding team.

4.6 Strategic Management of safeguarding

The responsibility and oversight for strategic safeguarding at Goldington Academy lie with the DSL, who provides strategic management in this area and feeds into the Headteacher.

This collaborative approach ensures that safeguarding initiatives align with the overall strategic direction of the academy.

Future plans for development involve the establishment of a second pastoral room with an additional staff member. However, challenges related to physical space allocation have been identified, indicating that logistical considerations are part of the development agenda.

While there is no specific standalone strategic plan for safeguarding, the academy's strategic direction is outlined in the Academy Development Plan, encompassing various aspects, including safeguarding.

In terms of articulating key issues faced by the academy and the local community, the DSL notes that there is not one major specific issue. However, emerging concerns include County Lines and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

4.7 Governance of safeguarding

The academy has a named Safeguarding Governor (SG) whose details are available on the academy website and within the policy documentation. The SG, a parent governor with a background in HR/Marketing and communications, has been in the role for two years.

Training for the SG includes sessions through the Governor Hub and Bedfordshire LA training, with additional input from the DSL during the annual full governor training. Regular meetings occur with the DSL every half term, complemented by ad hoc conversations as needed. The SG also serves as the Attendance and Behaviour Governor, contributing to a holistic oversight of safeguarding aspects.

The SG actively reports to the wider Governing Body, producing written reports that address various themes. There has been a lot of work recently implementing the use of focussed questions related to safeguarding during governor visits. This approach helps to raise the profile of safeguarding and ensures a 360-degree view of training needs.

Safeguarding is a standard agenda item at governor meetings, reflecting its importance within the governance framework. The SG perceives strengths in the academy's work related to safeguarding, highlighting the leadership team's transparency and approachability.

Challenges facing the academy include external influences, particularly from social media, and addressing mental health issues. The SG feels empowered to offer both support and challenge as required, contributing to a safe school environment. The active engagement with students further reinforces the sense of safety and comfort within the academy community.

Recommendations and suggestions

- *Consider the addition of another pastoral worker. To increase provision.*
- *Supervision: Consider formal safeguarding supervision for the DSL and DDSL.*
- *Consider uploading paper copies to the CPOMS system then destroying in line with the academies retention policy.*
- *Review the alerts process for CPOMS – currently whole of SLT have this but are not trained. Only those who 'need-to-know' should have the level of access.*

- › *Consider a discreet safeguarding action plan, this should be informed by the data collected through sources such as CPOMS as well as the local context. This will allow clear planning for future developments and help to ensure a continued lack of complacency.*

5 - Safeguarding Procedures and Record Keeping

5.1 Staff know how to report a concern

CPOMS serves as the platform for recording concerns, and staff are aware of the expected procedures for reporting incidents. The use of CPOMS is reinforced by the understanding that, depending on the nature of the concern, a conversation with the form tutor may be initiated. All concerns would be escalated to the safeguarding team, with CPOMS serving as the primary recording tool.

Training on the use of CPOMS has been provided to staff, and there are ongoing updates to ensure clarity, including email notifications about changes in recording procedures or categories. This proactive approach reflects a commitment to keeping staff well-informed about the reporting process.

Staff are well-informed about the process of reporting concerns regarding another member of staff, understanding the progression and the role of the Headteacher in addressing such concerns, in accordance with the academy policy. Clear guidelines exist for dealing with Low Level Concerns, and the use of Staff Safe is acknowledged. Staff are also aware of the appropriate contacts on the governing body if they have concerns, ensuring a comprehensive and well-understood reporting framework within the academy community.

5.2 Staff know how to escalate a concern

The academy staff have clarity on the process for escalating concerns, and they are aware of the academy's whistleblowing policy, which is readily accessible on the website. Training days have been dedicated to familiarising staff with the whistleblowing policy and its procedures, reinforcing its importance in the reporting framework.

The academy actively promotes awareness of external support mechanisms, with staff being informed about the availability of support within the Local Authority and accessible safeguarding governors. A crib sheet for support, including external resources, is provided on staff lanyards, serving as a quick reference guide.

While the majority of staff are aware of external support options, including those within the LA and through the safeguarding governor, it is noted that some support staff were not aware of the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line. Addressing this knowledge gap could further enhance staff awareness of external support avenues.

5.3 Staff are given feedback and support

Staff receive feedback when they raise a concern, primarily through checking in on CPOMS. There are instances when the safeguarding team provides additional confirmation through emails, ensuring that staff are informed about the actions taken. Feedback is shared on a

'need-to-know' basis, ensuring that relevant information is communicated. This approach contributes to staff confidence in understanding the outcomes of reported concerns.

For staff involved in challenging situations or those who receive disclosures, varying levels of personal support are offered based on the severity of the situation. Staff Mental Health Leads work with staff as needed. The provision of private healthcare, which includes free counselling services, adds an additional layer of support for staff well-being.

The safeguarding team plays a prominent role in academy life, providing wider support and guidance around safeguarding issues. This involvement underscores their commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for both students and staff.

5.4 Record keeping

Goldington Academy employs a dual approach to record-keeping, with some paper records securely stored in locked cabinets, while the primary system for records management is through CPOMS.

Records, whether paper or electronic, follow a comprehensive structure, including a chronology of events, documented actions, decisions, and outcomes. The documentation captures the progression of safeguarding matters, providing a detailed account of the steps taken.

In the electronic realm, student files on CPOMS may include additional documents such as minutes from meetings, enhancing the completeness and context of the record.

When transferring files to new settings, the academy adheres to a timely process, aiming to complete transfers within 5 days. Additionally, there is a record-keeping system in place to track files that have been sent and received.

5.5 Analysis of data

Safeguarding data is actively used for analysis, allowing the identification of trends or emerging issues. The safeguarding team utilises reports generated from CPOMS for in-depth analysis. The DSL, confident in using these tools, extracts valuable insights from the data.

The analysis of recent safeguarding data has revealed a clear focus on neglect within the academy. This insight has led to specific actions, shaping the training provided and informing the topics for governor visits. The DSL effectively uses the data to provide information to the governors, facilitating informed decision-making and strategic planning.

5.6 Single Central Record and Safer Recruitment

The academy has established a process for maintaining the Single Central Record (SCR), with the HR partner taking responsibility for its oversight. The SCR includes all relevant information and covers staff, volunteers, governors, and other personnel associated with the academy.

Letters of Assurance are in place for various visitors, such as contractors, health professionals, and counsellors, ensuring that their commitment to safeguarding aligns with the academy's expectations.



An up-to-date paper copy of the SCR is consistently available in case of inspection, demonstrating proactive readiness and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Regular audits of the SCR occur on a half-termly basis, with both the DSL and DDSL participating in the checks. Additionally, self-declarations are collected on an annual basis, contributing to the ongoing accuracy and completeness of the SCR. The DBS process is diligently managed, with roles such as invigilators being paid to remain on the DBS update service.

No gaps were observed in the SCR, and the academy employs a system that, while not inherently verifying information accuracy, is complemented by regular checks. The HR department actively works to ensure a comprehensive and accurate safer recruitment process, emphasising the importance of meticulous checks and adherence to established protocols.

Recommendations and suggestions

- ✦ *Ensure that staff are aware of the external advice line re. Whistleblowing.*
- ✦ *Ensure that there is clarity communicated to staff on how outcomes will or will not be fed back to following dealing with a disclosure/incident.*
- ✦ *Consider closing active cases on CPOMS to ensure accurate record keeping/reporting. This will also help to ensure that nothing is missed.*
- ✦ *SCR: Consider the use of leadership profile to ensure that things like section 128 is accurate.*
- ✦ *SCR: Profile set up – investigate the potential for linking fields to the mandatory requirements.*
- ✦ *SCR: Consider uploading new staff documents to the system so that they can be easily accessed.*
- ✦ *Consider redoing DBS checks for those who have been promoted to enhance the ongoing due diligence process.*
- ✦ *SCR: Overseas checks, it is recommended that they are completed for those who have ever worked with children abroad.*
- ✦ *SCR: Overseas checks, make sure that they have a certified translation.*
- ✦ *SCR: Ensure that the CPOMS system is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate for what is needed, as certain checks such as self-declaration and online checks are currently recorded elsewhere.*

6 - Multi-Agency Working

6.1 Engagement with the Local Authority

Goldington Academy has established arrangements for referrals through the Integrated Front Door (IFD), formerly known as MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub). The DSL, along with the DDSL, ensures attendance at all necessary meetings. Support from the wider team is coordinated to cover lessons, facilitating the DSL's active participation in critical safeguarding meetings.

The DSL, or the designated deputy, also actively attend meetings and training sessions organised by the LA. This participation enhances the DSL's familiarity with the referral process and ensures that the academy remains informed about the latest developments and

best practices in safeguarding, contributing to a well-informed and proactive safeguarding environment.

6.2 Engagement with Children's Social Care

At time of review there were:

- Child Protection – 2
- Child in Need – 1
- LAC – 5 (7 Previously LAC)
- TAF – 24

The safeguarding team have utilised the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and LA escalation process for challenging decisions made by other agencies when necessary. Incidences of escalation or challenges are appropriately recorded on CPOMS, ensuring a comprehensive safeguarding record is maintained.

6.3 Engagement with other organisations

The academy actively collaborates with a diverse range of external agencies to enhance its approach to safeguarding and student well-being. The academy's engagement with the Police extends beyond routine security measures, incorporating their involvement in whole-school assemblies to raise awareness of local issues. Mental health support is robustly addressed through the presence of the CAMHS team, offering both group and one-on-one sessions, as well as academy-wide interventions when required. Additional partnerships with organisations such as Chums, providing bereavement support, mentoring services, Young Carers, Terrence Higgins Trust (now known as iCaSH), and Aquarius for drugs and alcohol abuse, further enrich the support network available to students. This collaborative effort underscores the academy's commitment to holistic student development and well-being, fostering a safe and nurturing environment.

Recommendations and suggestions

- › *Continue to identify organisations that can help children and families that are part of the academy community.*

7 - Training and Induction

7.1 Induction

Safeguarding plays a pivotal role in the induction process for new staff at Goldington Academy. Dedicated induction days, spanning the entire day, include comprehensive meetings addressing safeguarding principles. For those starting in September shadowing, and mentoring programs are implemented to provide additional support and guidance.

New staff receive crucial documents and policies via email, including a handbook that serves as a comprehensive guide. To ensure awareness and understanding a signature is required to confirm that policies have been read and acknowledged. This meticulous record-keeping ensures that all mandatory documents are acknowledged and accessible, contributing to a thorough and transparent induction process. The training offered is integral to fostering a

safeguarding culture within the academy, and it is delivered with expertise by the DSL, emphasising its importance in the induction of new staff.

7.2 Annual staff training and updates

At the start of each school year, the academy ensures comprehensive whole-staff training, providing updates and reinforcing key safeguarding principles. This training is delivered to all staff members. PREVENT training, a critical component of staff development, has been completed.

Staff training records are maintained by the DSL, ensuring a clear overview of the training each staff member has received. This includes details of PREVENT training and other relevant courses as required. To address any potential gaps in training, the DSL actively monitors and acts on these records, maintaining a proactive approach to staff development.

7.3 Supporting students

During the review, it became apparent that every member of the staff who took part had a good understanding of their roles in supporting children.

7.4 Support and guidance from the DSL

Staff members express ease in seeking advice and assistance from the DSL, trusting that their concerns will be handled appropriately. The DSL's active engagement in academy life, offering extensive support and guidance on safeguarding issues, plays a crucial role in fostering a secure and nurturing environment for all members of the academy community.

Recommendations and suggestions

- › *Ensure any changes are updated as required i.e., recent PREVENT updates.*

8 - Academy Ethos and Pastoral Care

8.1 Academy ethos to support safeguarding and promote wellbeing

The academy's ethos, encapsulated by the recent Ofsted report's affirmation that "Every child has a chance to shine," serves as a guiding principle for the daily life of the academy. This ethos is visibly manifested in various aspects of academy life, including a robust extracurricular program that reflects a commitment to addressing each child's unique needs. Safeguarding is intricately woven into this ethos, ensuring its prominence in every aspect of academy activities and contributing to the creation of a secure environment. The pastoral structure of the academy, with its dedicated team, plays a pivotal role in offering daily support to students. This team actively engages in addressing safeguarding issues and concerns, aligning their efforts with the broader mission of providing a safe and nurturing space for every student to thrive.

8.2 Student voice

Goldington Academy students praise the academy's diverse curriculum, highlighting their overall sense of safety attributed to vigilant staff and CCTV. They commend the academy's

effective measures against bullying, including the presence of Anti-Bullying Ambassadors. Improved toilet safety, facilitated by cameras and staff duties, was also acknowledged. They felt that the academy values their input through surveys and councils. Students express enjoyment of sports opportunities and praise the academy's facilities while suggesting changes like an additional outdoor shelter.

8.3 Attendance

The academy implements a systematic approach to address unexplained student absences, conducting weekly meetings with the attendance officer to review those below the 96% target. Home visits are used when required, facilitated by the Local Authority's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). A proactive strategy involves first-day calls, texts, and emails. Registers in SIMS help monitor attendance. The borough manages Child Missing Education (CME) cases, and the process for responding to Elective Home Education (EHE) requests is clear, discouraging direct meetings with parents. Spreadsheets track cases, demonstrating a collaborative effort between the attendance officer and DSL to support safeguarding and well-being.

9 – What do children learn about safeguarding?

9.1 PHSE and RSE

The academy maintains a clear and accessible Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) policy on its website. Life skills lessons encompass RSE education. The member of staff responsible for the coordination of these lessons is clearly identified within the policy, as is information about the topics covered.

9.2 Online safety

The academy maintains a clear online safety policy. The main online issues include social media use and online relationships, and the academy employs educational strategies to address these concerns. The academy website signposts information for parents. Collaboration between the DSL and the IT team ensures effective filtering and monitoring measures are implemented.

9.3 Child-on-child safeguarding

Recently, the academy has responded to the child-on-child agenda through various initiatives, including staff training, student engagement, surveys, focus groups, posters, and displays. Records of incidents are meticulously kept, distinguishing between 'behaviour' and 'safeguarding' incidents. Risk assessments are utilised when necessary. Ongoing plans involve continuous education, regular updates to documents, and student discussions, ensuring a comprehensive and evolving approach to this critical aspect of safeguarding.

Recommendations and suggestions

- *Continue to review the PSHE/RSE curriculum to ensure that it reflects the current issues facing the student population – use data trends to inform this.*
- *Ensure that staff training is continually reiterated to ensure that staff feel confident in dealing with issues such as online safety (including outside of academy events).*

10 - Summary

10.1 What the academy does well

Goldington Academy excels in its approach to attendance management, conducting weekly meetings and employing an Education Welfare Officer to ensure students meet attendance targets. The staff's understanding of safeguarding duties contributes to creating a secure and nurturing environment. Noteworthy initiatives include proactive measures addressing child-on-child incidents and the promotion of online safety. The active involvement of the Safeguarding Governor underscores strong governance support, fostering a transparent safeguarding culture.

10.2 Key Recommendations

Specific suggestions have been made within each section of the report. However, the key areas to address are:

- *Consider the use of a generic email that can be used in place of the individual staff emails to ensure that if staff absence is an issue, it can be mitigated against.*
- *Ensure any changes are updated as required i.e., recent PREVENT updates.*
- *Consider closing active cases on CPOMS to ensure accurate record keeping/reporting. This will also help to ensure that nothing is missed.*
- *Review the alerts process for CPOMS – currently whole of SLT have this but are not trained. Only those who 'need-to-know' should have the level of access.*

10.3 Overall view of safeguarding

At the time of the review, the safeguarding practices at Goldington Academy were robust. The academy's emphasis on controlling access, clear visitor procedures, and prominent safeguarding displays contributes to a secure environment. The DSL and DDSL exhibit a strong understanding of their roles, actively participating in various meetings, while the supportive pastoral and safeguarding team structure enhances the overall safeguarding framework. The engagement with external agencies, ranging from the police to mental health organisations, showcases a comprehensive approach. The academy's proactive stance on attendance monitoring, development in dealing with child-on-child issues, and dedication to online safety further underline its commitment to safeguarding.