Governor Monitoring Visit

30th June 2021

Present: Jenny Comerford (JC) Deputy Head Student Support/Lead DSL

DJ Baron (DJB) Assistant Head DSL

Julian Beard Safeguarding Link Governor

Jane Swettenham Governor

The focus of the visit was Peer on Peer Abuse: Sexualised incidents - how the school has dealt with such incidents in the past three years and the actions arising following consideration of the OFSTED report “Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges” June 2021 and the Everyone’s Invited website.

The recent OFSTED review has put HSB in the media spotlight. By way of introduction JC made the point that SHS’s anti-bullying policy had 3 years ago been changed to a Peer on Peer Abuse policy as this fitted in and more properly reflected issues that arose in the school for example name calling. HSB does happen but it is not a frequent occurrence at school. However, there is an underlying culture of misogyny in society and the school has a duty to explore and address this further. This is a societal problem not just a school issue. However, we need to look at and address the underlying culture.

**1.Everyone’s Invited**

This website was set up by sexual assault victims. Some of these incidents happened in schools. This is essentially a pressure group and a safe place where victims can share their stories. The website records thousands of testimonies of sexual abuse. It is trying to effect change, put pressure on government and raise awareness. The website wants everyone to “think the unthinkable”. DJB has looked through the website. There are no testimonies that specifically refer to SHS. However, the school is on a list schools released by Everyone’s Invited where someone has named the school when they sign up to the website. It could be the school of the perpetrator rather than where the incident actually occurred. Contributors are required to complete a standard proforma provided by the website and they may have named the school on this proforma but have not done so in the testimony. In the light of Everyone’s Invited website the school has reviewed its policies and reviewed previous cases and the school’s actions to see if there are any lessons to be learnt.

Schools address HSB through their Peer on Peer Abuse policies so SHS’s Peer on Peer Abuse policy has been reviewed by DJB. This is a comprehensive policy and required only a few minor changes. Misogyny has been added to the policy and the NSPCC helpline. JS had also seen and considered the policy. The policy has been presented to SLT. It has been considered by S&P committee and will be presented to FGB next week.

**2. OFSTED Review**

This review was triggered by the website. Governors had read the report. Safeguarding is at the top of the list at inspections. JC was confident that our safeguarding is excellent and this has always been reflected in the school’s OFSTED reports. The only issues JC could see in the context of an inspection would be if an issue arose from a parental form or the inspectors witnessed an incident during an inspection. It is clear that safeguarding is at the top of the OFSTED agenda and OFSTED will ask students about HSB and they will follow that up. The school is aware that issues can and do sometimes arise out of school but the effects are brought into school such as online issues. The school in response to a question submitted by JS in advance of the meeting will be reviewing the school’s RSE curriculum offer. The Essex Schools Safeguarding Board did produce a model Peer on Peer abuse policy and some training, but these had not been made available until June. Andrew Hall provides useful direction and crucially is timely. Governors also receive his weekly Monday emails.

**3**. **A list of Incidents in the last three years**

Details of all incidents of SA or alleged SA in the last three years were reviewed. JC explained what the school had done in response. When the school receive a disclosure, they talk to both parties and the parents on the same day unless this is not possible if for example one young person is not in school. The matter is reported to both the Police and Social Care. It is important to listen to the voice of both sides both the victim and the alleged perpetrator. A comprehensive safety plan for the victim and perpetrator is put in place. The school has never had a situation which has proceeded to prosecution and conviction. The school’s safety plans have been highly praised by Social Care. There has been a case where the victim had significant mental health issues that existed prior to the alleged incident. There had also been domestic abuse within the family. This makes the situation even more difficult and challenging. The side effects can last a very long time. The victim became a school refuser and her mental health deteriorated. She received significant support from the school’s Oasis centre. The mother wanted the alleged perpetrator removed from school. The school already had in place a comprehensive safety plan that was regularly reviewed. The alleged perpetrator was compliant as were his parents. They accepted the safety plan and followed it. He received good MH support from Social Care in his home area. There have been no further complaints about this student. NFA from the police is commonplace as in this case. The police investigations are also protracted. The school continued to support both children throughout the criminal investigation and following NFA. Essex Social Care decided that the MH support already in place led by the school for the victim was adequate. Due to additional family issues the child left the area and the school to live with her father. Many of the children involved in these cases have hugely complicated backgrounds.

The school did have an uptick in allegations in Autumn 2019. A lot of work went into the issue of Consent in response during form times and assemblies. The school also focuses on healthy relationships in the Social Science Curriculum. Consent is a societal issue, but schools are part of this. Due to Covid the school has not been able to run educational workshops/physical assemblies since March 2020. This will come to the fore next academic year. It could lead to another spate of disclosures. The school have always and will continue to encourage students to talk to adults.

**Next Steps and Recommendations/Governor questions**

DJB highlighted next steps and DJB/JC responded to governor questions submitted in advance of the meeting (attached) not already covered elsewhere in this note. The school confirmed that there will be an ongoing review of a number of areas including the RSE Curriculum. This is predominately delivered by the Social Sciences Department. Leslie who leads this Department will be working with pastoral leaders to put together a form tutor and assembly programme. RSE had already changed this year how assessments were carried out. These are new entry/exit assessments which effectively track where the school has had an effect and where we haven’t. Some issues may be dealt with in Science for example contraception. RSE will need to have a broader conversation about the full spectrum of HSB. A working party has been set up to look at Tolerance and Respect which fits in with the Teacher Standards and is a language that the students understand. Educators can play an important role in making society the way it should be. The group are working on a statement of intent around tolerance and respect which will be shared with the whole school community. There is also a need for a broad and detailed community survey of students, staff and parents. The voice of the child is crucial if we don’t ask about their experiences it would just be the school’s interpretation. Uptake in previous surveys has not been great so we will need to see how we can encourage responses. In school student surveys will need to track and get to the truth of the students’ responses which will help inform the tutor programme for example. Training will be needed for staff, but the school will need to know what training is required. There will be compulsory CPD on HSB and language/misogyny and how this is dealt with in the classroom. Further training will be informed by responses to the staff survey. Assemblies are planned on consent and online safety. DJB has recently done an assembly on social media for year 7. Safeguarding assemblies maybe shared with parents as an initial conversation and way to reach them beyond newsletters. Going forward the school will look at:

Reviewing training for all staff

An assembly and form tutor programme

The use of external speakers

Looking at a cultural shift in the context of tolerance and respect which will be the focus of the working party who will produce a mission statement

Surveys of the community to inform the school’s approach to the above

JC commented that the layout of the Science Department labs is out of date with long solid benches where the actions of students cannot be clearly seen by staff and this has given rise to complaints by students of inappropriate behaviour. Refurbishment has been discussed but no plans yet to undertake refurbishments. In response to a question from JB it was confirmed that the school do organise whole year workshops at which the students are not usually separated by gender. However, they do work in smaller groups as part of these workshops. JC in response to a question from JS confirmed that the school works well with other agencies. However, the school deals with Social Care from a number of different areas including Essex, Havering, Thurrock, Southend and Enfield. All have slightly different systems in place and the speed and effectiveness of the response varies. Some are better than others. In terms of the Police the school has to deal with both Essex and the Met. This can be challenging where the victim and alleged perpetrator come under different police areas. If the alleged perpetrator lives in an area covered by the Met, Essex Police for example don’t want to get involved.

JS and JB then fed back to CJH on the visit which had been both useful and informative. Governors could see clearly that the school were responding in the light of Everyone’s Invited and the OFSTED report. Governors looked forward to receiving the mission statement from the working party. Governors were impressed with the responses of the school to previous incidents of HSB. Governors also noted that the Peer on Peer abuse policy had been promptly reviewed in April by DJB and were impressed with the comprehensive action plan that been set out including reviews of key areas such as the RSE curriculum and staff training.

Governors thanked JC and DJB for putting together a comprehensive agenda for the visit. We also wish JC the very best for the future as she is leaving the school at the end of the current academic year after 21 years service to the school and more than 30 years as a member of the teaching profession. As both JB and JS have served as safeguarding link governors JC’s extensive knowledge of safeguarding (which she readily shared) and her support for our students has been remarkable. Thank you.

Julian Beard……………………………………….

Jane Swettenham……………………………….

Dated: