

Annual Safeguarding Statement of Assurance

Academic Year 2023 – 2024

1. Nexus Multi Academy Trust provides high quality educational provision for children and young people on roll at:
 - Abbey Special Academy, Rotherham;
 - Bader Special Academy, Doncaster
 - Becton Hospital Academy, Sheffield;
 - Beech Special Academy, Mansfield
 - Craggs Primary Academy, Rotherham;
 - Coppice Special Academy, Doncaster
 - Discovery Special Academy, Doncaster
 - Fountaindale Special Academy, Mansfield
 - Heatherwood Special Academy, Doncaster
 - Hilltop Special Academy, Rotherham;
 - Kelford Special Academy, Rotherham;
 - Kenwood Special Academy, Sheffield
 - North Ridge Special Academy, Doncaster;
 - Pennine View Special Academy, Doncaster;
 - The Willows Special Academy, Rotherham.
2. The Nexus MAT Board of Directors understands the safeguarding responsibilities placed upon the Trust as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and considers them of vital importance.
3. The organisation continues to meet its statutory requirements in relation to the Disclosure and Barring Scheme. Trust policy ensures all employees and volunteers (which includes governors) who work with children and young adults have had appropriate checks and that these are recorded – along with other relevant information – on the Single Central Record.
4. Audits of the Single Central Record are undertaken twice a year by the Trust's Human Resources team and/or the safeguarding quality assurance lead. All 15 academies received an audit report with areas for action.
5. The Trust safeguarding quality assurance lead also reviewed all schools' section 175 self-assessments. In addition, half termly safeguarding bulletins were issued throughout the year.

6. Safeguarding policies are up to date. Policies are reviewed regularly by Headteachers and the Academies Policy Review Board, updated in response to national guidance, and routinely shared with the Trust Board.
7. There is a Board Director who is the named lead for safeguarding. The Board receives reports on safeguarding across the organisation at least 3 times a year through the work of the Standards Committee, which is underpinned by the challenge and support provided by Trust governance and the more detailed reports received at the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Board, the minutes of which are reported to the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee has developed a comprehensive dataset to enable it to have oversight of a wide range of performance, including those relating to children subject to safeguarding interventions by their home Local Authority, or who are subject of specific plans under section 17 of the Children and Young Persons Act (1969). This enables members to pick up on any unexpected or atypical developments and ask for further clarification.
8. The named executive responsible for safeguarding across the Trust is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Senior staff support is seen as an important function of the role and safeguarding is an area of focus in monthly supervision sessions between the CEO, Executive Regional Directors and all Headteachers, and case discussions take place routinely on a demands-led basis.
9. In addition, each academy has a named Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. Each Designated Safeguarding Lead is offered half termly supervision from an external social work consultant, commissioned by the Trust. This is optional, though all Designated Safeguarding Leads engage in this process openly.
10. As part of the Executive Assurance Partner safeguarding quality assurance visits to schools, the evidence within the s.175 audit has been reviewed as well as exploring strategies that the schools use to promote the culture of safeguarding within their schools. This work has given executive leaders an in-depth insight into the strengths and areas for development for each school, as well as highlighting schools that are able to demonstrate – and help to disseminate within the Trust - good practice in this area. Visits have taken place to all Nexus MAT schools, to ensure that the Trust can promote security of performance in all areas and to address any shortcomings where these are identified. The Trust is committed to ensuring good practice in enabling and maintaining a strong safeguarding culture across its estate. Headteachers report that the site visits have been robust and that they have felt supported and able to reflect on the

systems in place, making improvements where necessary to further strengthen safeguarding practice.

11. As well as highlighting individual aspects for schools to develop, the reviews have also identified aspects for whole Trust development. Online safety has been an aspect about which some schools have felt less secure. A number of schools have identified a lack of security of information in their policy around the new filtering and monitoring regulations and whilst other schools are confident/secure, this is an area which is a priority in all of the schools. Other aspects include developing ways to share online safety information for parents and the impact of artificial intelligence in education.
12. One of the more problematic areas in evidencing compliance at the beginning of the academic year related to Recruitment Checks and the Single Central Record. This has been addressed. The Executive Assurance Partner leading on safeguarding quality assurance has worked alongside HR to ensure that school resource managers have a clear understanding of requirements through access to training, one-to-one support and sharing of guidance. Re-formatting how audits of compliance are conducted has helped to secure evidence and increased the confidence of Trust and school leaders in this area.
13. In March 2024, the first of a series of planned termly meetings of all Nexus MAT Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads took place, the objective of which was to share good practice and to provide opportunity for discussion across the whole Trust, in a supportive and safe environment, where themes and emergent patterns could be identified and to facilitate effective communication between staff and the central Trust team. Outcomes have been positive, with Designated Safeguarding Leads sharing that they are keen to network wider and build relationships not only in their locality areas, but also across the Trust. Many Designated Safeguarding Leads have reported that they enjoyed networking with other colleagues from different schools and have changed some of their own approaches following the sharing of good practice.
14. All staff have undertaken and are up to date with safeguarding training, both core and on specific subjects or themes (such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and updated Prevent guidance etc). This is delivered by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in each school, and all Designated Safeguarding Leads attend training delivered by their Local Safeguarding Children Partnership. In some cases, external experts are brought in to schools to deliver specific workshops on specialist subject areas. Some schools have highlighted the need

to provide clear evidence that directors and local governors also receive appropriate safeguarding training in order to equip them with the knowledge to provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge and maintain a confident grasp of the safeguarding risks for children in their school.

15. There is a school improvement plan in place for each academy, which provides clear expectations of training, linked to the section 175 audit. This is delivered through face-to-face sessions on school INSET and/or twilight sessions, with updates shared at regular whole-school workforce briefing sessions.
16. Behaviour and wellbeing is reported on separately to the Trust, to ensure a holistic view of safeguarding and welfare is presented. Directors have also established a Trust Pupil Cabinet and a Staff Parliament to ensure there is systematic access to pupil and staff voice.
17. All referrals to a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) have been dealt with promptly and transparently, with the number of referrals reported to Directors on a term by term basis.
18. There have been zero parental complaints submitted to the Trust citing safeguarding concerns, in this reporting period.
19. Likewise, there have been zero concerns raised by employees or volunteers citing the Trust's confidential (whistleblowing) reporting policy, in relation to safeguarding practices.
20. All reports and records are scrutinised in detail by Directors, as indicated above, and this is recorded in the minutes of meetings. Where there are complex safeguarding cases, the Named Director for Safeguarding is briefed on the details to maintain openness and transparency.
21. At the time of writing, five Nexus MAT academies have been inspected by Ofsted throughout this reporting period, and safeguarding was found to be effective in all of these schools, with no recommendations for improvement made.
22. The Trust is also the named sponsor for two inadequate local authority maintained special schools – Derrymount (URN: 122949) and Holgate Meadows (URN: 126712). Both schools were placed into special measures due to inadequacies in safeguarding practice. With the Trust's support, both schools have since been found to have effective safeguarding arrangements in place, following Ofsted monitoring visits.

23. As the Trust expands, so too does the importance of effective scrutiny at Board level to ensure that all the children in our schools remain safe and that as an organisation we are able to both identify any emergent issues which may require particular attention, and to intervene promptly where necessary. The current Director for Safeguarding is stepping down from the Board at the end of the academic year, but a new Director with significant safeguarding experience has been appointed and has been shadowing the current incumbent to ensure continuity.
24. As the current Director for Safeguarding, I am satisfied that the systems and processes are in place to enable the Board effectively to scrutinise Trust performance and to assist and where necessary hold to account all those who are charged with promoting and upholding the highest standards of good safeguarding practice. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all central Trust and school staff involved in the work of safeguarding our pupils and commend them for their efforts to promote a culture of openness and honesty in helping to deal with the many challenges to effective practice in this area of their work.
25. On the basis of this work, Nexus Multi Academy Trust confirms it has considered its position in regard to safeguarding children and has assurance that it is meeting requirements and is following good practice.

Name:	Peter Castleton
Designated:	Named Director – Safeguarding
Date:	17 July 2024