

Thursday 29 June 2023

Dear Alumni,

Safeguarding update

Last year, I wrote to our Foundation community about safeguarding. In that communication, acknowledging that in the past safeguarding did not have the priority in schools which it rightly has today, I explained some of the steps we had taken and were planning to take to strengthen the governance, leadership and management of safeguarding within the Foundation and its schools.

I also reported that – while we are not dealing with allegations about any recent matters – we had received some disclosures of an historic nature that we were addressing. I encouraged you to share any further concerns you may have and gave details to enable you to do so.

I now want to update you on developments since then, particularly since the government's response to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has finally been published. Whilst none of our schools were called to give evidence to IICSA, the Inquiry clearly threw up challenges for the education sector as a whole, and we are committed to examining our own past and to being transparent about the steps we are taking so that anyone who has anything to share knows they will be taken seriously.

When anyone has raised concerns we have, wherever possible, opened a dialogue with them and offered our support. We have taken further action where possible too. A small number of disclosures relate to allegations of non-recent abuse and have been reported to the police and local authorities, and in some cases enquiries continue. This information is by its very nature confidential and sensitive and I hope you will understand why – other than to say we are working with the authorities in each case – I am unable to go into any detail here.

While I cannot comment on those cases I can say that our Safeguarding Review Committee – a sub-committee of our Board of Governors – has been very active in reviewing the safeguarding position more broadly, as well as considering individual matters where the police and local authority are no longer involved or where the allegations relate to unacceptable behaviour rather than matters of a potentially criminal nature. Again, these cases are non-recent but it is clear from the Committee's work that some of our pupils were subjected to abusive behaviour in our schools in the past, and for that we are truly sorry. While we cannot change the past we can recognise that – for some pupils – their time at school was very regrettably marred by these experiences, and we can also learn lessons so the pupils in our care today are as well protected as possible.

With this in mind, the Committee has made a number of recommendations already, each of which have been adopted. These include the provision of support to victims, and enhanced practices and

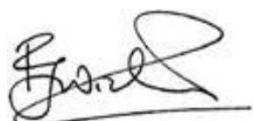
processes, learning from the mistakes of the past, for example: more encouragement of pupils to share their worries using a range of identifiable and anonymous reporting systems, curricular review, more consistent recording/retention of records, a review of relevant policies and procedures (including those on low level concerns) and more staff support (including reflective supervision of pastoral staff).

Hand in hand with this, we have also made further investment in our safeguarding function. At the start of this academic year, we welcomed Ms Rebecca Jessup in the new role of Foundation Director of Safeguarding. Ms Jessup reports to me as Foundation Principal and works alongside the schools and their safeguarding leads, to enhance yet further our safeguarding culture and develop our safeguarding arrangements, making every member of our community as safe as possible.

It is important to recognise that safeguarding will never be 'fixed' or 'done' and it is an evolving process. It is one we are wholeheartedly committed to. Best practice involves proper reflection on the past and the ability and agility to deal effectively with known and emerging risks. We are determined to achieve this and need your help to do so effectively. If having read this, there are any matters you wish to discuss, including if you have any new disclosures to make or concerns to raise, please share them with us - with the Head of your school in the first instance:

- Foundation Director of Safeguarding: Ms Rebecca Jessup r.jessup@warwickschools.co.uk
- Warwick Preparatory School: Mrs Hellen Dodsworth head@warwickprep.com
- Warwick Junior School: Mr John Bond wjshead@warwickschool.org
- The Kingsley School: Mr James Mercer-Kelly head@kingsleyschool.co.uk
- King's High School: Dr Stephen Burley head@kingshighwarwick.co.uk
- Warwick School: Mr James Barker head@warwickschool.org

Yours sincerely,



Mr R Nicholson
Foundation Principal