

In the second of our series on the Every Child Matters agenda, we look at tackling bullying and protecting your pupils from harm

protect AND SERVE

THIS MONTH: STAY SAFE

“Inspectors will want to see evidence that you are informing children to be aware of and minimise risks

Stay Safe is really the centre of Every Child Matters – it was the failure of children's services to ensure the safety of Victoria Climbié which led to the creation of the ECM aims in 2004. This outcome includes seemingly mundane tasks such as health and safety as well as the difficult but crucial multi-agency work which aims to ensure children are safe from neglect, violence and exploitation.

As with all of Every Child Matters, it's tempting to think that the government is trying to make schools responsible for solving every societal ill. But the key issue in all outcomes, and most especially here, is to emphasise the role of all children's services and the importance of cross-agency communication and support.

We'll be looking at cross-agency working in more detail later in our ECM series, but a key aspect is to inform all staff, ideally through formal training or communication, of who they should speak to if they have concerns over the welfare of any pupil. The Every Child Matters website (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk) contains guidance on a range of safeguarding issues from signs of child trafficking to general advice on what to do if you suspect a child is being abused. It would be a good starting point for putting together

policies and informal training for your school.

For specific schools targets, there are two sections of your school inspections framework which are relevant here: 6A – pupils' care welfare, health and safety; and P8 – child protection procedures.

REDUCING ACCIDENTS

There are two aims relating to accidents in this outcome – reducing the number of road traffic deaths, and the number of A&E admissions. The schools role could be split into protecting and educating.

There are several pieces of legislation to be aware of when putting together your H&S policies, and it can seem daunting to get on top of all these regulations, but the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk) is a useful, if slightly cumbersome, tool. Business Link (www.businesslink.gov.uk) is another useful site for finding information and guidance.

The core of your H&S requirements is risk assessments – you can't manage risks if you don't know what they are. In a risk assessment, you should list potential hazards in your school and decide how you can eliminate or minimise the risks attached to them.

Under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999), risk assessments should

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be carried out by a “competent person.” That is, someone with time and skills to understand the principals of risk assessment and prevention, the ability to identify potential hazards and design strategies to eliminate or minimise these and be up-to-date with H&S legislation.

Most of these skills are relatively common-sense, requiring just time and planning to keep up to speed with legislation, though you can go on courses to support your H&S work, or of course use specialist advisors to support you. It's also worth considering whether there is someone on your team who could take on responsibility – whether a senior member of staff who already has training, or a competent staff member keen to take on training and responsibility.

Inspectors will also want to see evidence that you are informing children and supporting parents and carers to be aware of and minimise risks.

TACKLING BULLYING AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Research shows that the rate of bullying among primary school children is higher (24-50 per cent) than their counterparts in secondary schools (10-28 per cent) – a worrying, and perhaps surprising, statistic. There are sample anti-bullying policies available through Teachernet and several children's charities such as Kidscape (www.kidscape.org.uk).

But as bullies take advantage of new technologies you should be keeping your anti-bullying policies up to date, too. While all schools will have an internet firewall or filter stopping children accessing inappropriate sites and monitoring usage,

e-bullying may be slipping through your e-safety net, because inappropriate behaviour doesn't just happen on the web. Cyber-bullying and cries for help can occur in a variety of applications – such as MSN Messenger, email or Microsoft Word – which often go unmonitored or are subject only to random checks and are not picked up by internet filtering solutions.

The best solutions work by monitoring all text on your school's PCs – regardless of whether it is saved, sent or merely typed; online or offline. These solutions match text against a series of carefully researched, built-in libraries and report on any offensive and suspicious words. Some will allow staff to add or remove words and phrases from these libraries to best meet the needs of the school.

When a violation is detected, the software will take a screen capture that can be sent, along with username, PC name, date, time and offending word or phrase, to the network administrator for immediate attention. Some solutions may also stop any offensive messages or emails from being sent, flashing a warning (which can be worded by your staff) explaining to pupils why it has not been sent. This is a great educative tool and can help to minimise instances of ‘accidental bullying’ when a message is sent in jest but proves more offensive than the sender intends.

As well as identifying those high risk areas outlined above, you can also identify possible depression, anxiety or suicidal intent buried within written material.

While Ofsted inspectors recognise that bullying will never be eradicated completely from

schools, there should be a significant commitment from schools to work against it, and make the environment conducive to finding and asking for help and advice when pupils need it.

IMPROVING SECURITY

While incidences of attacks or dangerous visitors are thankfully rare, keeping your site secure is another key concern. There are a variety of sophisticated ways to protect your school: networked CCTV and access control solutions communicate with one another to offer school premises the ability to deploy a scalable system that can alert the presence of security risks such as unwanted visitors – before an undesirable scenario develops.

Access control can intelligently secure the perimeter and entrance areas after the start of school hours. Gates can be automatically locked on a schedule and then released as required – either for individual visitors or when school closes for the day. In the event of a fire alarm, controlled areas can be automatically released.

But all of this technology needs to be deployed and supported by well trained staff who are aware of the importance of keeping perimeters secure and are confident to question site visitors who aren't properly badged or identified. As with the area of health and safety and bullying policies and equipment are really only as effective as the will of people to implement them.

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OUTCOMES	Children and young people are safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation	Children and young people are safe from accidental injury and death	Children and young people are safe from bullying and discrimination	Children and young people are safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school	Children and young people have security, stability and are cared for	
TARGETS	Re-registrations in Child Protection Register	Number of 0-15 year-olds injured or killed in road traffic accidents	% children who state they have been bullied in the last 12 months	Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour	% U16 looked after for more than 2.5 years living in the same placement for more than two years or placed for adoption	
JUDGEMENTS	Children and young people and their carers are informed about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them	Children and young people are provided with a safe environment	The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised	Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to current government guidance	Services are effective in establishing the identity and whereabouts of all children and young people 0-16	Action is taken to avoid children and young people having to be looked after
EVIDENCE	Children and young people are educated about road safety and how to respond to other hazards; and the dangers posed to them by some adults and how to minimise them	Staff are trained to identify the risks of harm and manage them. Health and Safety assessments are acted on and updated regularly	Complaints about staff working with children and young people are monitored and acted upon	Guidance and training is provided to staff and volunteers working with children and young people on how to recognise and raise safeguarding and welfare concerns	There are secure arrangements for sharing information when children and young people 0-16 move across areas, including unknown destinations	Families are offered timely and co-ordinated support to prevent the need for children and young people to be looked after

PLEASE NOTE THIS TABLE IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE. FOR THE COMPLETE GUIDANCE VISIT: [HTTP://WWW.OFSTED.GOV.UK](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) AND SEARCH FOR 'EVERY CHILD MATTERS'. A FULL LIST OF JUDGEMENTS AND ILLUSTRATIVE EVIDENCE IS AVAILABLE.