

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy - Terms of Reference

Summary and Rationale

Between February and November 2024, a number of parents raised concerns about the experiences of their children at Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy (MVPA). They felt that these suggested likely widespread and long-term abuse of children. An initial dossier containing these concerns was compiled and submitted to Hackney Council. These were anonymised on the basis that parents feared the consequence of direct engagement with MVPA.

Over this initial period, the Council led on the response and the CHSCP maintained a 'watching brief'. At the time, there was support for the approach being taken by the Council and the attempts being made to encourage parents to engage with the school. The Department for Education (DfE), Ofsted and the Academy were all engaged by the Council in discussions about how best to respond to the issues raised, although no progress was made and no satisfactory resolution achieved.

In November 2024, more alleged concerns were received and to date, these amount to over 300 separate accounts. At this time, no consent has been provided to release these accounts to anyone connected with the Mossbourne Federation.

An extraordinary meeting of the CHSCP's Case Review Sub Group was brought forward and convened on 10 December 2024. At this meeting, members made a unanimous recommendation that a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (review) should be undertaken. The CHSCP's Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner (ISCC) subsequently made the decision to instigate the review, with this being ratified by safeguarding partners on 11 December 2024.

The Review's Focus

The CHSCP has agreed the broad Terms of Reference for the review should cover two phases:

- **Clarifying and then determining if the concerns / reports can be substantiated.**
- **Identifying any lessons concerning the application of behaviour policies and their impact on students, families, staff and the wider school community.**

Whilst recognising that the concerns submitted include reference to other schools, the review is taking a proportionate approach pursuant to the original concerns and in line with its primary purpose (to identify learning). As such, it will concentrate its activity on MVPA.

That said, this does not preclude the review from considering any alleged incident involving other settings (either within or outside of the Mossbourne Federation), where this is deemed necessary to pursue a particular line of enquiry. Where relevant to other education settings and/or the DfE, learning will be extrapolated and identified as such.

The CSPR Questions & Methodology

In line with WT23, the review's methodology will provide a way of looking at and analysing practice as well as organisational structures and learning, and allow the review to reach recommendations that will improve outcomes for children. The review will reflect the perspective of children, parents and practitioners in the context of managing student behaviour within MVPA. It will ensure that:

- Families are invited to contribute and understand how they are going to be involved and have their expectations appropriately and sensitively managed
- Practitioners are fully involved and invited to contribute their perspectives without fear of being blamed for actions they took in good faith.

In most reviews, several questions are defined at the outset which form the basis of the key lines of enquiry. The circumstances of this review require a different approach. Beyond the two phases that provide the review's focus, it is important that key lines of enquiry are identified based on the full analysis of the submitted concerns. This will allow the independent reviewer to identify any relevant themes, patterns and trends that can be probed in more detail as necessary. This will facilitate the review being focused on aspects of practice where learning is most likely to be accrued.

In terms of the key tasks that underpin the review's focus, these are set out below. The precise sequencing is to be determined. Document analysis and interviews with complainants, key practitioners and (where relevant) third parties will form the basis of evidence gathering for the review.

Clarifying and then determining if the concerns / reports can be substantiated.

- The independent reviewer (and any designated support staff) will consolidate, analyse, and categorise the submitted concerns according to the Terms of Reference.
- Where deemed necessary, the independent reviewer (and any designated support staff) will, with the complainant's explicit consent, seek to engage with them directly. This may include situations where further information is required to clarify the nature of the experience, make clear any ambiguities, or where dialogue could aid in resolution.
- Where deemed necessary, the independent reviewer will engage Mossbourne leaders, teachers and other school staff for interview.

- The independent reviewer will also provide a confidential means of contact that can be used by existing teachers and school staff.
- Where a concern has been identified as having been considered via Mossbourne's complaints process, the independent reviewer will be provided full access to relevant documentation.
- Further to the above activity and taking account of all available documentation and evidence, the independent reviewer will determine whether any of the individual concerns, or themes contained within them, can be substantiated for the purposes of this review. The reviewer will assess whether these concerns require further analysis or action. This determination will be based on the balance of probabilities and refer to factors such as the nature of the concern, its reported severity and frequency, the credibility of the information, and its relevance to organisational policies and government guidance.

Identifying any lessons concerning the application of behaviour policies and their impact on students, families, staff and the wider school community.

- The independent reviewer will evaluate information, data and views held by statutory agencies and other organisations to understand Mossbourne Federation's and MVPA's approach to behaviour management, the experiences of children at MVPA and their outcomes as evidenced by those agencies.
- The independent reviewer will evaluate information, data and views to understand the application of behaviour policies by front-line practitioners at MVPA.
- The independent reviewer will evaluate information, data and views to understand the application of behaviour policies as they relate to leadership, governance and culture and the influence and oversight of those that set practice expectations in this area (within both the Mossbourne Federation and MVPA)
- The independent reviewer will seek to establish how the arrangements in both the Federation and MVPA align with the [DfE's guidance on behaviour in schools](#) dated February 2024.

Other lines of Enquiry

- The independent reviewer will evaluate the sufficiency of the arrangements within the Federation and MVPA for responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024. This includes the arrangements for managing low-level concerns.
- The independent reviewer will seek to establish the reasons why there appears to be no confidence in the MVPA complaints process.

Confidentiality

Whilst all efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality, it is important to note that in some cases, the nature of the concern being raised may require the sharing of information with statutory agencies. This could involve circumstances where children are identified as suffering or being likely to suffer significant harm. It could also include circumstances where there is an allegation that a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.
- Behaves in a manner that discriminates against a child on the basis of one or more of their protected characteristics.

Time Period covered by the CSPR

Concern submitted to the CHSCP prior to 31 January 2025 will be considered as part of the review. This will include concerns that are current and those that are non-recent. In this respect, there is no restriction on the time-period covered by the review.

However, given the review's focus on contemporary practice at MVPA and what, if any, improvements are required, it will focus its analysis on key lines of enquiry / key practice episodes arising in the last five years. This does not preclude the independent reviewer assessing complaints outside of this timeframe where, based on their professional judgement, they deemed it relevant to do so.

Participating Agencies

The following agencies will contribute to the review.

- The Mossbourne Federation Governing Body
- Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy
- Hackney Council (including all relevant services within Hackney Education and Hackney Children & Families Services)
- The Metropolitan Police Service
- NHS NEL London Integrated Care Board (including the ICB's designated safeguarding professionals)

- Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation trust (including Homerton's named safeguarding professionals, school nursing and relevant leads for child mental health services)
- East London NHS Foundation Trust (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- Relevant Voluntary and Community Service agencies (to be identified)

Should other agencies / bodies be identified as being significant to the focus of the review, the CHSCP team should be notified without delay.

Actions for Participating Agencies

Participating agencies should secure any relevant records they consider to be relevant to the focus of the review. There is no need to create a chronology of events, although agencies may either have one, or wish to do this in preparation for any interviews.

Independent Reviewer

The review will be independently led and authored by Sir Alan Wood CBE.

Review Panel

The independent reviewer will be supported by the CHSCP's business unit and a defined Review Panel, chaired by the ISCC and including safeguarding experts from different disciplines within the CHSCP's footprint.

On behalf of safeguarding partners, the Review Panel will ensure sufficient expertise, oversight and challenge is evident in the work of the review and its findings. It will supervise the review and ensure the reviewer is making satisfactory progress and that the review is of satisfactory quality.

Timescale for completion

The CSPR was initiated on 11 December 2024. In line with statutory guidance, a maximum six-month timescale has been set for the review. Any necessary extension to the timescale will be agreed by the ISCC.

Other Investigations

LCSPRs are not conducted to hold individuals, organisations, or agencies to account, as there are other processes for that purpose, including employment law and disciplinary procedures, professional regulation and, in exceptional cases, criminal proceedings. These processes may be carried out alongside a review or at a later stage.

Based upon the information and evidence obtained by the review, and where deemed necessary to do so, the Mossbourne Federation should consider whether any disciplinary action should be taken against practitioners whose conduct and/or practice falls below acceptable standards. The Federation should refer to their regulatory body as appropriate.

The LCSPR process neither prevents nor impedes any action deemed necessary by other bodies with a statutory responsibility for the oversight, intervention and practice within MVPA. This includes, but is not limited to, the DfE, Ofsted, the Mossbourne Federation and MVPA itself. Should any party consider additional investigations are required, then the CHSCP's ISCC and the CHSCP team should be notified at the earliest opportunity. All relevant parties should subsequently meet to confirm there is no impact upon the integrity of the review, and that no confusion or duplication of focus / effort is being introduced.

Any complaint relevant to the focus of this review that is received by MVPA whilst the LCSPR process is ongoing should be dealt with by MVPA according to its existing arrangements. With appropriate consent, the CHSCP team should be notified of all such complaints.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) has reviewed the submitted concerns and will be copied into any future concerns received as part of this review. As necessary, the LADO will consider whether further action is required in line with existing thresholds and procedures. With appropriate consent, the CHSCP team should be notified of all such complaints.

Should anyone involved in the review identify a case or concern that identifies actual or potential risk of significant harm or where any of the criteria for engaging the LADO are met, then a referral must be made to Hackney's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and/or the LADO in line with existing procedures. Where there is concern that a child is at immediate risk of significant harm and/or in danger, the police should be contacted without delay.

Quality-Assurance

The final report will be initially quality assured by the Review Panel, followed by the CHSCP Case Review Sub-Group. As an independent report, it will then be submitted by the ISCC to the statutory safeguarding partners of the CHSCP.

Report Standards

The review report should take account of the standards set out in paragraphs 360-366 of WT 23 and the guidance issued by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel in September 2022.

Action Plans

Where practice improvements are identified and recommendations are made, these will be developed into a stand-alone action plan that will be overseen by the CHSCP's Case Review Sub Group, Boards and Executive.

Dissemination of Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from the review will be disseminated via the CHSCP's usual channels that can include CHSCP communications, training and specific briefings.