



The 12 Key Reasons Safeguarding was Judged 'Not Effective'

In 2019-2020, 59 schools were considered ineffective in safeguarding children due to the following 12 factors. An interesting read that focuses on the management of records, tracking concerns, leadership, and governance, as well as risk assessment.

1. Record Keeping

This was the most common reason for Safeguarding we came across in the reports to be labelled 'Not Effective'. **It was found in 31 of the 59 schools.**

Three main areas were frequently highlighted as bad examples of record keeping:

a) Lack of detail – Not recording outcomes, not recording dates (paper), overlooking minor details. **NB:** Not recording in detail means that vital information may be missed. Not recording minor details may leave you missing the final piece in a jigsaw, especially when the data is shared with other agencies.

b) Disorganised – Not having an accessible chronology, paper files dumped in a folder, files for separate students kept together.

c) Concerns not recorded first-hand, e.g., a child discloses to teacher, the teacher passes to DSL and DSL records leaving no direct record of the initial disclosure!

- - If there is a criminal investigation, this chain of correspondence would be heavily scrutinised as staff receiving the initial disclosure should record.

KCSIE states that records should include:

- 'A clear and comprehensive summary'
- 'Details of how the concern was followed up'
- 'A note of decisions reached and the outcome'

A good question to ask yourself is, 'If the DSL left tomorrow, would someone understand what was going on from the records themselves?'

2. Leadership and governance

This was the second most common reason, found in **30 out of 59 schools.**

Ofsted frequently referenced governors not having a good understanding of safeguarding, and therefore not effectively holding safeguarding arrangements to account. Governors are reliant on leaders to tell them what is working well. Governors should ensure a good understanding of safeguarding procedures to allow them to critique policy and question what is working themselves.

How can staff be expected to understand the arrangements if those writing the policy don't?

Another point often raised in Ofsted reports relates to dealing with allegations against adults poorly, e.g., not referring to the LADO correctly and sometimes not taking allegations seriously.

3. Following up concerns

This reason was found in **28 of the 59 schools**.

- a) Not making referrals to Children's Social Care promptly - 'sitting on' information that should be shared immediately!
- b) Using unclear systems and not using appropriate pathways to refer.

You need to make referrals as soon as practicable and must ensure a clear pathway for referrals exists.

4. Pupil safety

This reason was found in **26 of the 59 schools**. Pupil safety falls into three broad themes:

- a) **The school culture** To quote one Ofsted report - 'the culture victimises students for being themselves'. E.g., Students with certain protected characteristics may feel unsafe.
- b) **Physical safety** By this we mean violence from students, or sometimes even staff.
- c) **Bullying** Is bullying dealt with well? Systems may be great, but are they followed? Are staff aware of the extent of bullying?

5. Training and understanding of staff

This reason was found in **25 of the 59 schools**.

It refers to staff not understanding their safeguarding duties, and not meeting the minimum requirements for training. Safeguarding training should be delivered on induction, no matter what time of the year that staff member joins. Safeguarding updates should be delivered at least annually. However, we recommend in-depth training, short and often to keep this fresh in the minds of staff.

Formal DSL training should be delivered every two years for the DSL and Deputies.

Training should also be 'localised' where possible. For instance, if radicalisation is a major concern in the area, then there may be a need for more Prevent training. If CSE is a concern, training should focus on that.

6. Risk assessments

This reason was found in **14 of the 59 schools**.

Risk Assessments cover a lot of different aspects. Some are compulsory such as in the case of a report of sexual violence where it is **required**.

We have often seen schools criticised for not having a risk assessment in these areas:

- Site risk assessment (e.g. school split between sites and no RA for students moving between them)
- Students on a part-time timetable not being risk assessed
- School trips

TIP: Remember to keep risk assessments as a live documents. An outdated risk assessment is of no use!

7. Registration and exclusion

This reason was found in **12 of the 59 schools**.

a) Not informing local authority when students are removed from school roll and off rolling.

b) Not checking pupils that are not attending.

c) Inaccurate registration of pupils.

8. Safer recruitment

This reason was found in **12 of the 59 schools**.

Judicium's HR service held a sofa session on Safer Recruitment last week. To see more about this topic please click the link to the summary notes [here](#).

In summary, make sure appropriate checks are done on staff and recorded on the SCR.

9. Alternative provision

This reason was found in **9 of the 59 schools**.

Safeguarding can be judged not effective due to this. For example, pupils attending the school may be adequately safeguarded, but if one pupil goes to AP they **MUST** receive the same level of safeguarding.

Here one Ofsted report summarises what can go wrong with AP: "The school have not been alert to the risks for pupils who were not attending, or when the provision failed to meet pupils' needs."

It is important not to let AP become an afterthought. It is evident in KCSIE:

“When a school places a pupil in AP, the school remains responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil.” **The AP does not take sole responsibility** and it is something that the home school must be aware of.

When using AP, make sure:

- Attendance and wellbeing are checked regularly
- There is an established process for when a pupil does not attend as planned
- Obtain written confirmation that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the AP.

10. Pupils not raising issues

This reason was found in **7 out of 59 schools**.

A school can have perfect policies, but if students don't feel able to talk to staff those policies won't work, especially around harmful sexual behaviours. It is important that children know of trusted adults within school that they can talk to.

There are many ways in which schools allow pupils to raise issues without talking face to face. If it hasn't done so already, perhaps consider if your school is able to implement something like this.

11. Site Safety

This reason was found in **5 of the 59 schools**.

Although this was a fairly uncommon reason, it was seen when:

- Leaders have not considered well enough the risks posed by a split site
- Complacent attitude towards site safety
- Unsafe equipment is accessible
- Medication not stored correctly

12. SCR

This reason was found in **4 of the 59 schools**.

Many schools worry about their SCR – but actually very few schools are admonished for this!

It is rarely a reason for failure!

Ofsted's 'Inspecting Safeguarding' document mentions:

- If there is a **minor** admin error that can easily be rectified before the end of the inspection, you will have the chance to resolve this

- **Minor** = failure to record one or two dates, illegible entries, one or two omissions where the school holds the information but has not transferred this to the SCR.
- There is NO ALLOWANCE for serious failures, such as DBS checks

Practical Steps and Actions Schools Can Take

1. Read Ofsted's Inspecting Safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills>
2. Regularly audit the effectiveness of your safeguarding. Go through the 12 categories and highlight strengths and any concerns.
3. Involve your wider SLT and whole governing body.
4. Get a fresh pair of eyes to assess your safeguarding. Consider using any partner schools, other DSLs, safeguarding governors or an external auditor.
5. Continue to update your safeguarding knowledge (e.g., free training sessions, new consultation on KCSIE 2022, Twitter, Andrew Hall). Have key documents saved on your Desktop and hit shift-F to find key words.
6. **Stay positive!** Remember that we don't safeguard for the sake of Ofsted – we do it to keep our pupils safe.