



INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING REVIEW

Trinity Academy Bradford

This review considers safeguarding practices at Trinity Academy Bradford which opened in February 2021 as part of the Trinity Multi Academy Trust.

Veronica Mellor
Independent Safeguarding Consultant
Systemic (Safeguarding) Solutions Ltd.
17 June 2021

This safeguarding review was commissioned by Nick Robinson, Executive Principal, Trinity Academy Halifax and Tom Taylor, Senior Vice Principal of Trinity Academy Bradford and completed Thursday 17 June 2021. The review considered statutory requirements and the regulatory framework for schools as set out in

- The Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted 2019)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2020)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2018)

Background

Trinity Academy Bradford (school), which was previously known as Queensbury School and Academy, is now part of the Trinity Multi Academy Trust (Trust) since 1 February 2021, a highly successful Trust operating both secondary and primary educational provision. As such the school has access to a wide range of support and expertise from other schools within the Trust, in particular from Trinity Academy Halifax, which is an outstanding school, on its improvement journey.

The last Ofsted inspection for the predecessor school, June 2019, concluded the overall effectiveness of the school as inadequate along with the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for students; leadership and management required improvement.

During the course of the day, I spent time with

- The executive principal, senior vice principal, assistant principal student support, assistant principal teaching and learning, members of the student wellbeing team along with members of the teaching and middle management team and
- A student's panel comprising of 5 young people from years 7 to 10.

Everyone I have spoken to was passionate and enthusiastic about the school's improvement journey; staff are working extremely hard to develop and embed a culture of outstanding teaching and learning, pastoral care and a creative curriculum so that students can achieve positive outcomes. It is clear from my meeting with the student panel that they also welcome the new direction of travel and the changes that have been implemented.

At this juncture it is important to recognise that the current improvement journey is a "work in progress", the school has only been operating for 16 academic weeks and students have only been on site for 11 of those weeks. The senior leadership group (SLG) has had to prioritise a number of key areas relating to the school building and infrastructure, whilst continuing to manage the impact of Covid-19; there has been a significant review of staffing, and a new, more linear management structure is now in place which aims to strengthen the middle management tier. Whilst there has been significant staffing changes, some are yet to be finalised and put in place for September 2021.

The senior vice principal is passionate to develop a clear ethos and culture for the school, to achieve this the school needs strong, authoritative and consistent leadership modelled by all staff with the school; supported by effective pastoral support and challenge, the foundations of which are being laid; progress and impact of new measures will be incorporated into an implementation plan.

Progress to date includes:

Day to day arrangements

The school follows Trust procedures and processes including:

- Electronic signing in and different coloured lanyards for supply staff, contractors and visitors.
- All visitors and contractors are supervised at all times unless confirmation of DBS clearance has been obtained.
- The single central record is maintained centrally by the MAT.

Breakfast club

- This will be reinstated from September 2021, operating from 8 a.m. and providing a free breakfast, ahead of the official start of the school day.
- Pastoral and teaching staff will be present to ensure that any support needed is accessible.

Developing a new identity for Trinity Academy Bradford

- Students attending the school wear a mixture of uniform e.g., Queensbury School and Academy and due to poor changing facilities the school allows students to attend in sports clothing on days that they have PE.
- From September 2021 there will be a new school uniform.
- The Trust is providing the blazer and tie free to all students and other uniform subsidies will be made available as appropriate e.g., for vulnerable students.
- Clear guidance has been placed on the school website for parents regarding the new uniform and appropriate footwear and trouser styles.
- The Trust is also seeking approval for a new build, which both staff and students are excited about. If a new build is not forthcoming then there are ambitious plans to improve provision at the school.
- In the meantime, there are plans for making interim improvements e.g., the school hall and stage and changing rooms.

The student panel felt the new uniform represented a “new start” for the school with the new branding going some way to removing the stigma of it being a “failing school”.

They recognised the close alignment between the school and Trinity Academy Halifax feeling that this was beneficial and would also contribute to removing its stigma as a “failing school”; they recognised the benefits of a wider curriculum on offer and better behaviour management etc.

Safeguarding

There have been significant changes to how safeguarding is delivered within the school which includes:

- CPOMS (IT software package) has been used in the past for managing safeguarding and pastoral activity within the school, however the quality of recording was poor and there was no oversight of activity, follow up or outcomes; access rights have been significantly streamlined and only the senior leadership group and student wellbeing have access rights to either view or input information.
- Staff now have to complete a cause for concern form, a supply of which are available in all rooms and classrooms; once completed it should then be passed immediately to members of the student wellbeing team in person; at this point there is a face to face discussion re concerns which allows for reflection and consideration of contextual

information in relation to what has occurred and what is known about the student; the student wellbeing team make a preliminary assessment to determine the most appropriate response and escalate if required; staff are clear that if members of the student wellbeing team are not available they hand the form, in person, to the DSL or the senior vice principal.

- Feedback from the staff panel was that they preferred using the form and having a face to face discussion regarding their concerns which is preferable to being dependent on receiving alerts via CPOMS or not receiving any feedback to concerns.
- All cause for concern forms, ongoing monitoring and support of students are discussed at weekly pastoral COBRA meetings, face to face meetings that enables better sharing of information and identifies appropriate strategies; staff are then advised via safeguarding registers that there are concerns, but no details as to what they are, thus staff are alerted and know that the student wellbeing team and the DSL hold additional information.
- Supply staff receive an information pack, including information about safeguarding and what to do if they have a concerns about a student or the conduct of another member of staff, including other supply staff.
- Induction of new staff is well embedded; new starters mid-year are also inducted; staff receive copies of the school's child protection/safeguarding policy; the behaviour for life policy; staff code of conduct; attendance and children missing from education policy along with part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) and details on how to report a concern to the student wellbeing team and/or the DSL.
- From September 2021, the DSL role will be undertaken by the assistant principal student wellbeing and benefit from a period of handover from the current DSL and will receive formal supervision, termly. In addition, the senior vice principal is an experienced DSL and pastoral leader.
- As part of the current staffing restructure the student wellbeing team has been strengthened; members of the team have a wealth of experience within the school and new staff are being recruited e.g., welfare officer; the team will be headed up by the assistant principal student wellbeing, who will be the DSL from September 2021; the team will be in the same office along with two attendance officers, pastoral admin and the welfare officer.
- CPD for the student wellbeing team includes developing specialisms in relation to specific safeguarding issues e.g., mental health, domestic abuse, to support staff on a range of issues which impacts on student wellbeing; in addition, the team will be trained to the same level as the DSL.
- The welfare officer will lead on all aspects of medical needs i.e., risk assessment and medical plans and will be supported by their counterpart at Trinity Academy Halifax.
- The school's investment in CPD is clearly mapped and they are confident it will further develop and foster a positive safeguarding culture within the school; staff are able to attend specific training e.g., mental health, CSE, peer on peer; there is an expectation that learning from such training is disseminated to all staff via an overview briefing.
- All staff receive regular safeguarding updates including face to face briefings and training, emails, etc; safeguarding information is available on SharePoint and from September 2021 a staff handbook will be available; staff are aware of the NSPCC whistle blowing helpline.
- The student panel said unanimously that they felt safe in the school and qualified this by saying they felt supported and reassured that there was a dedicated student

wellbeing team who were available to support and assist them because they had dedicated time and capacity to do so.

Safeguarding curriculum

From September 2021 the safeguarding curriculum will be delivered via the curriculum for life; staff are currently being introduced to the framework and more CPD is planned ahead of full implementation; SLG are mindful that for the curriculum to be effective, all staff need to be fully onboard, competent and confident in delivering the core and golden threads that run through the curriculum that focusses on;

- Emotional and physical wellbeing.
- Relationships including diversity, discrimination and equality.
- Safety including alcohol and drugs, bullying, online.
- Financial literacy and careers.

The programme links, where applicable, to the national curriculum, RSHE guidance, consolidates previous learning and identifies outcomes/skills learnt; it meets the requirements as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) to teach a broad and balanced safeguarding curriculum that provides students with the skills to tackle the many challenges they face in the 21st century, building resilience and emotional literacy.

A key challenge for the school is to address poor literacy skills, especially in relation to SEND and disadvantaged students; for ¼ of all students at the school English is an additional language (EAL); in addition, year 7 entrants have very poor literacy skills. Guided reading, led by the assistant librarian is now in place and from September 2021 there are wide ranging initiatives planned to increase skills using literacy and numeracy funding for year 7 students.

Some concerns were expressed by the student panel in relation to making up lost ground especially for year 10, post Covid-19 and preparation for their GCSE's next year; they welcomed the wider choice of GCSE's offered to year 9 since joining the Trust, including performing arts; they shared some concerns regarding interactive whiteboards not working; the geography department being under staffed; broken equipment e.g. some science practical's cannot be done in the current provision and they were acutely aware of staff changes still happening as the end of the academic year approached. On a positive note, they were able to appreciate that there were less supply teachers leading to more consistency and improvements in the quality of lessons.

Safeguarding policies and procedures

Most policies and procedures are those of the Trust e.g., admissions, alternative provision, anti-bullying, behaviour for life; which are updated and issued centrally; some policies are specifically Trinity Academy Bradford e.g., safeguarding, attendance and punctuality but these are predominantly Trust policies, which are modified to reflect local arrangements i.e., Bradford. Some policies are yet to be updated, a legacy from the previous academy sponsor, but these will be completed in due course. The policies and procedures relevant to this review are compliant with current statutory guidance advice and guidance issued by the DfE and HM government

Behaviour

Areas for improvement from the predecessor school Ofsted inspection 2019:

- Low level disruption in class and the impact of this on learning.
- Low expectation by staff of students.
- Behaviour systems not being used consistently across all subjects.
- Reducing fixed term exclusions.

The school has now established a number of new initiatives to improve the management of behaviour and also the movement of students at the beginning and end of the school day, during lesson changes and break times, which includes;

- Staff supervising the main gate and student access and exit from the school.
- The main gate is closed at 8.30; after this time students have to access school via the main entrance encouraging timely attendance at the school. Occasionally, students attending on transport can be inadvertently delayed due to traffic conditions.
- Access to the main teaching block is via two doors, one entrance is now designated for entry and the other to exit the building, preventing students entering both doors and then converging and causing a bottle neck on the corridors.
- Teachers meet and greet students on arrival at the classroom and doors are left open during lesson.
- Students are supervised moving from the teaching block to the main building at break time and lunch to ensure that they transition in an orderly and safe way i.e., walk and not run.
- During breaks, teaching and pastoral staff ensure that once students are seated, they remain seated and collect any rubbish. This system makes staff “visible” and available to ensure good behaviour and conduct, but also to be on hand to support any vulnerable students.
- Bullying incidents are currently recorded on an excel spreadsheet by the student wellbeing team, broken down by type of bullying; if a cause for concern form is raised in relation to an incident then this is recorded on CPOMS and discussed at a COBRA meetings.
- The previous academy sponsor trained peer mentors via the Princess Diana Trust, the student panel felt that this would be beneficial to revisit; they commented “there is always bullying” but felt the number of incidents were lower, and when they occur are now dealt with appropriately by staff.

Behaviour observed on this visit was exemplary, when students were instructed to follow rules they did so immediately, they greeted staff as they passed, held doors open for fellow students and staff. Walking down the corridors during lesson time, no behaviour issues were observed and students were on task. There is a culture of senior staff “walking the corridors” to reinforce the need for students to remain on task and support classroom teachers to address any issues. This is not to say that during the day were no incidents or that students did not have to be placed in internal exclusion or receive a detention for failing to follow rules, there were, but overall, behaviour appeared well managed and the Behaviour for Learning (BfL) policy implemented consistently and fairly.

The effectiveness of the BfL was echoed by the student panel who were very positive about the new approach to behaviour management saying that “staff were on it” when students misbehaved and were consistent in following up consequences; they felt that lessons were calmer and better; there was less internal truanting whereby students hid

within various parts of the school e.g., the lift, to avoid lessons; consequences and detentions were followed through by staff.

Attendance

This a priority area for the school; the school has to address a legacy whereby attendance has not been effectively promoted or managed, resulting in a culture of low expectations and apathy as to the importance good attendance in respect of safeguarding and raising standards. As a result, the school is starting from a very low base, not helped by IT issues and ineffective electronic registers, issues which will be addressed and in place by September 2021.

Significant progress has been made in terms of processes i.e., first day call procedure and attendance intervention matrix are now in place; full implementation will be supported by ongoing CPD. In addition, capacity to manage attendance will be increased with two attendance officers to be in place from September 2021, who will be sat with the student wellbeing team; there will also be support and expertise provided by the Trust's education welfare officer (EWO) and impact measures will monitor progress and sustained improvement in attendance across all year groups and specifically vulnerable students.

The school have already made some significant progress in terms of persistent non-attendance and exclusions by reducing both between 3 and 4% across the board; there is some way to go to reach the national average and the school's own target but the progress made has the potential to be consolidated and improved upon.

SEND and disadvantaged students:

The Ofsted inspection for the predecessor school June 2019 found that:

- There were lower levels of progress.
- The quality of student's work limits their ability to recall essential knowledge and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Although teachers are aware of those students who are disadvantaged and those with SEND in their teaching groups, too often, these students do not receive the support they need to make better progress.

In addition, to the above findings, the school has found that SEND pupils had high levels of absences. Progress to date:

- The current SENCo has been seconded from Trinity Academy Halifax and will be a permanent member of staff from September. In addition, the school has recently appointed a deputy SENCo who will commence their training in September 2021.
- All staff, including supply staff are alerted to students who have SEND and/or are disadvantaged and vulnerable children via MintClass, however, no specific details are shared but pupils status is identified by specific codes. If they need further information they can speak to any member of the pastoral team.
- See Student (pupil) premium below.

Student (pupil) premium

Ofsted recommendation for the predecessor school June 2019:

- An external review of governance and use of the student premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

A review of the school's pupil premium strategy has been completed by the Calderdale School Effectiveness Service, May 2021; 6 recommendations for action were identified and included;

- Establishing clear leadership and accountability;
- Identifying barriers to learning and individual student need, shared between academic and pastoral staff, in order to inform teaching, intervention, and pastoral support;
- The provision of financial and human resource to transform expectations of disadvantaged parents and students to improve attendance and behaviour;
- Improving the quality of education for all learners supported by robust CPD and QA processes for staff in order to improve effectiveness and attainment;
- Establishing an effective strategy to improve student literacy. Approximately a quarter of learners have English as an additional language;
- Retaining some academy PP funding to support a "hardship fund" to address fundamental basic needs where required (bus passes, uniform, equipment and so on) and access to the wider curriculum.

Monitoring the impact of alternative provision (AP)

Paragraph 201, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) states any school using AP continues to be responsible for the safety and welfare of students and as such must be satisfied that the provider meets the needs of the pupil; the school must seek written confirmation from the provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been undertaken, including those checks that the school ordinarily perform in respect of its own staff. Arrangements at the school prior to February 2021 were woefully inadequate and adopting the Trust arrangements for monitoring AP the school:

- Uses the Trust's approved provider list when commissioning AP.
- Now has a clear understanding of students accessing AP, currently 3 students, 1 in year 8 and 2 in year 10.
- Requires the AP to confirm attendance daily to the school, any absence is followed up by the school.
- Has addressed issues relating to management oversight by designating responsibility for AP to a year manager within the new structure who will be responsible for profiling students, identifying appropriate AP via tailored plans and tracking progress.
- Has an audit proforma to be completed ahead of progress meetings, which are held every 3 weeks, predominately by phone but can be face to face meetings, the outcome of which are recorded.
- Will discuss progress and any issues with young people as part of the progress review.
- Is working towards a new collaboration with the ARC, AP based at Trinity Academy Halifax which will be the school's designated provision.
- Has addressed issues relating to inaccurate attendance coding when students are attending alternative provision.

Partnership with parents and the community

Part of the Ofsted judgement for the predecessor school in relation to leadership and management considers whether leaders "seek to engage parents and their community thoughtfully and positively in a way that supports pupils' education".

Historically, the predecessor school has been a failing school since 2010; and suffers a poor reputation within the community of Queensbury, it is against this backdrop that the current school has to re-engage with the school and wider community; parents of local

children opt to send their children to other secondary schools, outside the catchment area including to Trinity Academy Halifax, rather than this school. Since February 2021, the school:

- Communicates with parents regularly and posts information on the school website; distributes an electronic fortnightly newsletter to parents updating them on a range of issues e.g., the Covid-19 re-opening in March 2021, the new uniform and details of parental consultation events in July.
- Has engaged and responded to concerns raised by the community in a timely manner e.g., complaints from a shop keeper that students are blocking their shop entrance whilst queuing for their bus; a member of the student wellbeing team discussed concerns with the shopkeeper, attended the bus stop at home time and spoke to students about queuing without blocking the shop doorway.
- Are in the process of developing a communications strategy for implementation in September 2021 to build on the initial progress made.

COVID-19 catch-up premium

The schools catch up strategy has been updated and focusses on

- Raising the attainment of all pupils to close the gap created by COVID-19 school closures.
- Reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Accurate diagnosis of student literacy/EAL needs to provide targeted, quality assured and impactful interventions that close the gap and address barriers to learning and progress.
- Improving the quality of provision both in curriculum planning, effective delivery of teaching and learning and effective feedback to students.
- Creating a learning culture in the classroom through clear and consistent behaviour structures.
- Improving pupil attendance so that no more learning time is lost post Covid. This will involve continuing to improve parental communication, to understand the barriers facing students at home and the impact this has on school learning.
- Improving student access to technology during lockdown and post lockdown should there be limited ICT access at home.
- The student panel expressed some still some residual concern about catching up especially for year 10.

Interim Executive Board (IEB)

Whereby schools are judged to be in urgent need of improvement the local authority will, as is the case at the school, puts in place a time limited IEB, it replaces the governing body and its function is to ensure a sound basis for future improvement and to promote high standards of educational achievement. Specific governors have been assigned specific roles and carry out visits on a regular basis. Several have already taken place with reports held on file.

Summary

The school is only just at the beginning of a challenging improvement journey, open for only 16 weeks and students on site for 11 of those weeks; previously this has been a failing school for over decade due to serious weaknesses in leadership and management and outcomes for students; it now benefits from being part of a successful and vibrant Trust and has access to a range of support and expertise. The senior leadership group has been significantly strengthened along with the

middle management team. Many of the staff have been with the school for several years and remain loyal and committed to the school and the community; some students are the third generation of their family to attend the school.

I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and energy expressed by the senior vice principal who articulates a clear and passionate vision to improve outcomes for students at the school; he is supported by equally passionate assistant vice principals who share his vision and teaching staff, who feel, many for the first time, empowered and supported to make a difference for their pupils and that the direction of travel is “what is needed, fast, challenging but doable”; everyone acknowledges the substantial investment made by the Trust in their CPD and new resources e.g., photocopiers and IT equipment; the student wellbeing team feel positive about their restructure and feel the new systems work better; overall staff feel they are well supported and “up for the challenge”. Finally, the student panel whose voice I have incorporated throughout this report, know this improvement journey is about them, to enable them to reach their individual potential and to be equipped to deal with the many challenges they face, they very much want to be a part of a successful school.

Veronica Mellor
Independent Safeguarding Consultant
Systemic (Safeguarding) Solutions Ltd.