

Safeguarding Leadership: The Role of the DSL and the Safeguarding Governor

PaJeS Governor Workshop
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What the session will cover:

- Sharing our safeguarding journey, not a 'perfect model'
- Focus tonight:
 - What the DSL role looks like in practice
 - The challenges of leading safeguarding
 - What has strengthened safeguarding at JFS
 - How governors can support and challenge effectively

Our Safeguarding journey

- Special measures 5 years ago
- Safeguarding improvement has been a long-term journey
- Improvement came from:
 - Culture
 - Systems (CPOMS, internal risk register 1-4, nexus meetings)
 - Capacity of team
 - Strategic and operational oversight
 - Governor support and challenge
 - Student voice
 - Internal and external audits
- Last Feb – Platinum Award for Excellence in Safeguarding
- Recent Ofsted inspection – exceptional safeguarding feedback

Discussion 1

- If you walked into a school with a strong safeguarding culture, what would you expect to see, hear or feel?



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DSL role

- Not just reactive or crisis-based.
- Depending on the size of school, involvement may be universal or in high-risk cases only.
- Creating a safeguarding culture
- Maintaining high profile of safeguarding – with staff, students and parents
- Includes oversight, advice, challenge and quality assurance
- Ensure timely referrals, effective multi-agency working and escalation where needed
- Oversee record keeping, policy, training, governor reporting and statutory compliance
- Attendance and Mental Health and Wellbeing also viewed as safeguarding

Challenge of the DSL role

- **Ensuring that safeguarding is binary.** Either cases are open and being actively pursued or they are closed.
- Ensuring there is no drift in cases or missed follow-up
- Staffing capacity
- Managing the volume and complexity of safeguarding concerns
- Having the time and headspace to think through complex decisions
- Responding quickly to low-level concerns before they escalate
- Supporting and developing the wider safeguarding team
- Managing the emotional toll of the role
- Keeping up with guidance, compliance and changing safeguarding risks

Discussion 2

- What do you think are the risks to your school from a safeguarding perspective?
- As a safeguarding governor, what would you want to know to reassure yourself that safeguarding concerns are being addressed?



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What has strengthened safeguarding at JFS

1. Building the right team

- Initial model: DSL and 5 full-time safeguarding officers
- Now: DSL, 5 DDSLs (Heads of year overseeing key stages), 4 year-based safeguarding officers, 1 safeguarding, attendance and wellbeing officer
 - Safeguarding officers are non-teaching – triage, first point of contact
 - DDSLs provide oversight and support for more serious caseloads
 - DSL provides strategic oversight, advice and quality assurance

** DSL and DDSL's have significantly reduced teaching timetables, whole team receive supervision*

What has strengthened safeguarding at JFS

2. Internal risk register – safeguarding tracker

- All 2090 students are ranked from 1-4 (4 = serious concern, 1 = no concern)
- Ratings are reviewed regularly

FSM	EAL	PP	Current Social Care	Previous Social Care	Most Recent Child Services	Attendance	Last Year Attendance	Two Year Ago Attendance	Achievement	Behaviour	On Calls	External Suspensions (Days)	Internal Seclusions (Days)	SEN Status	Academic Previous Two	Academic Previous	Academic Current	Reading Age	Inclusion Rating	LGBTQ	Safeguarding Rating	Comments
✓		✓				32	50	93	37	-51	4	0	1		-21	-19	-23	-	4		4	[Redacted]
						75	79	92	113	-37	1				-6	-23	-12	13.5	0		4	
				3		87	91	97	116	-380	42	0	5	E	-14	-10	-10	10.7	4		4	
			CIN		11	99	94	99	66	-257	33			K	-15	-14	-11	-	3		4	
					✓	90	94	88	166	-65	0				-8	-8	-5	17.4	0	Yes	4	
✓		✓		7	✓	71	90	83	97	-354	29	3	5	K	-8	-13	-15	6.5	3		4	

Data this produces:

Year													Variation							
	September 2025				November 2025				March 2026				Sep 2025 to Nov 2025				Nov 2025 to Mar 2026			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
7	5	12	112	200	4	9	117	198	6	8	142	173	-1	-3	5	-2	2	-1	25	-25
8	13	23	104	136	5	16	116	134	5	16	129	121	-8	-7	12	-2	0	0	13	-13
9	10	8	133	133	6	6	144	127	9	4	139	131	-4	-2	11	-6	3	-2	-5	4
10	5	9	112	131	6	8	114	129	7	8	117	125	1	-1	2	-2	1	0	3	-4
11	12	19	114	156	2	10	90	147	1	8	111	129	-10	-9	-24	-9	-1	-2	21	-18
12	5	17	158	109	3	11	168	104	5	11	188	82	-2	-6	10	-5	2	0	20	-22
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tota l	50	88	733	865	26	60	749	839	33	55	826	761	-24	-28	16	-26	7	-5	77	-78

Data shared with Governors showing the changes in the risk register for all students at risk across the academic year

What has strengthened safeguarding at JFS

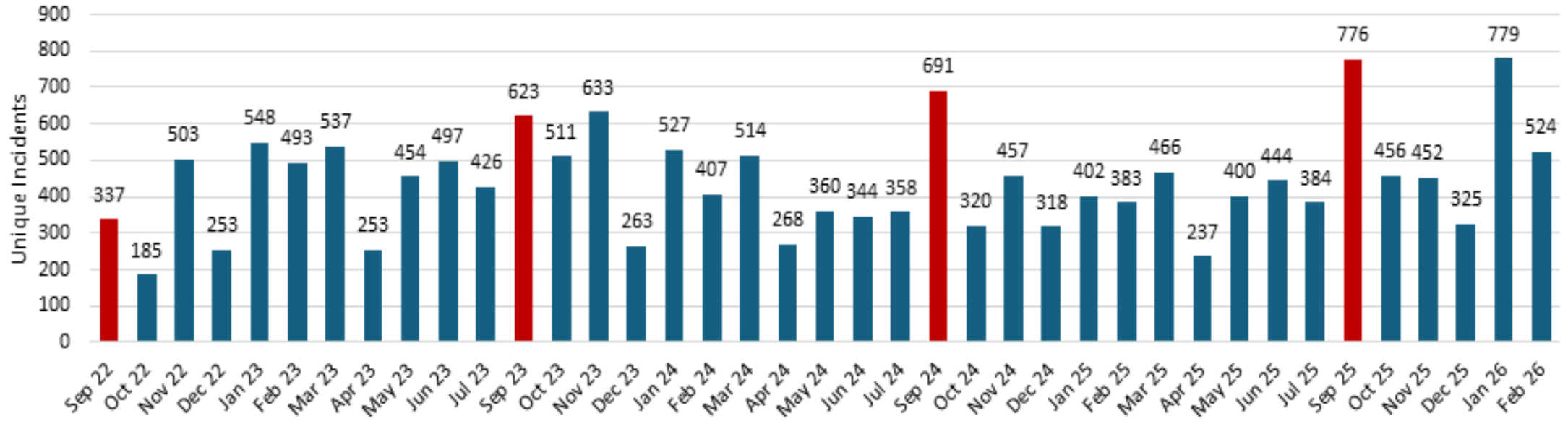
3. CPOMS

- Alerts set appropriately – allows the concerns to be viewed from different lens (academic, SEN, pastoral/safeguarding)
- Tags help identify patterns, themes, emerging risk (informs PSHCE, assemblies, parent education)
- DSL receives all alerts – helps support consistency and quality assurance
- Incidents are either open and being actively pursued, or closed once all actions completed (ensuring no drift/loose ends)
- Report of open cases reviewed twice a half term



No of new incidents - monthly

CPOMS Reporting Data - September 2022 to Present



Consistently high numbers of staff reporting gives assurance of continued vigilance

Incidents by categories – monthly

Category	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Family-Related Issues	121	58	25	70	106	1	160
-- Bereavement (Other)	21	11	12	19	51		75
-- Bereavement (Parent)	6	3	1	1			1
-- Carer	1						
-- Domestic Violence	2	1		1		1	3
-- Housing Issues	2		1		1	1	
-- Parental Neglect	1						1
-- Parental Separation / Divorce	14	5	1	5	6	2	4
-- Parental Substance Misuse	2						
-- Physical Abuse (Child to Parent)	3			3			
-- Sibling Conflict	3	2		1	2		3
-- Unwell Parent	14	13	4	14	4		13
-- Unwell Sibling	1	2	3	3	4		5
-- Young Carer	4	2		1			1

Category	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Mental Health	90	45	35	33	62	24	61
-- Anxiety Disorder	9	4	6	1	4		3
-- Attempted Suicide					1	1	
-- Body Image	3	1		2	4		3
-- Depression	4	1		1	2		
-- Eating Disorder	4		1	1	1	1	
-- Exam Stress	8	6	8	4	14	6	7
-- Low Mood	6	7	1	1	6	4	4
-- OCD	2	1		1	2		
-- Panic Attack	5	2	3	3	3		4
-- Self Harm	10	3	4	5	6	2	12
-- Sleep Issues	5	1	4	3	4	1	3
-- Suicidal Thoughts	5	5	5	5	6		5

- Identifying themes and emerging risks allow us to feed in PHSCE priorities, additional assemblies, themes for parent newsletters etc.

What has strengthened safeguarding at JFS

4. Regular meetings

- Full team, 8am daily
 - Discuss priority cases, cases with overlaps across year groups
 - Review referrals, checklists for students at Alternative provision, reduced timetables
 - Multi-disciplinary team (safeguarding and MHWB team)
 - Specific training
- Nexus meetings - fortnightly per year group
 - Attended by SENDCO, Head of year (academic), Safeguarding Officer/DDSL (pastoral), DSL
 - Use of safeguarding tracker
- DSL/Headteacher meeting twice a week
 - High priority cases, themes/emerging risks
 - SCR spot check
 - Changes in guidance/compliance



What has strengthened safeguarding at JFS

5. Student voice shaping priorities

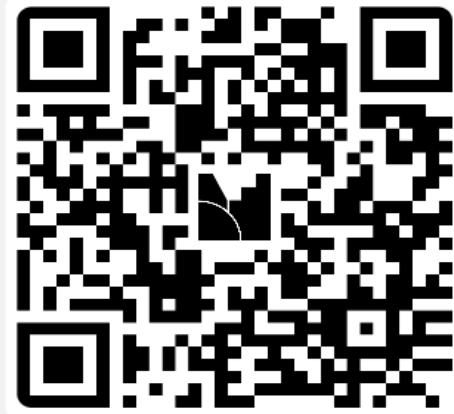
- Annual safeguarding focus groups
- Pupil surveys

6. Mental health and Wellbeing

- MH Lead part of the safeguarding team
- Year 12 Mental Health First Aid trained peer mentors, staff mentors, safeguarding check-ins, JAMI Mental health wellbeing practitioners, Brent Mental Health Support team, School counsellor

Discussion 3:

- What questions could a safeguarding governor ask that give strong assurance without crossing into operational case management?



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How I work with our Governor

Our model

- **Building a relationship is KEY.**
- Termly meetings with wider group of Governors – in depth reporting producing
- Safeguarding link governor and DSL meet once every half term
 - Discuss themes, patterns and priorities
 - Talk through serious cases anonymously
 - Review audits, action plans and policy updates
 - Example: recent collaborative work on students at AP's, on reduced timetables
- Conduct safeguarding focus groups together
- Inform directly if a serious issue has wider implications
- Suggest relevant training, areas for quality assurance and any additional key meetings to attend; safeguarding governor uses this to shape oversight, challenge and support
- **Maintain clear boundaries around individual cases**

What Governors see:

- Numbers of individual safeguarding incidents reported
- Data by safeguarding category
- Safeguarding, attendance, mental health and wellbeing themes and actions/impact
- Movement of ratings on the safeguarding tracker
- Serious case themes, anonymised
- Low-level staff concern overview
- Annual safeguarding audits
- External audit outcomes and action plan
- Training records and staff engagement
- Policy updates and statutory compliance

What gives me confidence as a Governor:

- Safeguarding culture embedded within school
 - Everyone's responsibility
- Inset staff training each term

- Half-termly meetings with DSL
 - Focus on high level issues / case studies
 - Mental health provision
 - Low level staff issues

- Review SCR – Single Central Record each term
 - School ready? Inspector ready? Missing DBS? Contractors?



What gives me confidence as a Governor:

- Spotlight meetings at Governor committee level
 - Deep dive into absence data
 - Case studies
 - CPOMs themes
 - Students in alternative provision and reduced timetable
 - Audit of paperwork and introduction of checklist for each student
- External audit
 - Incyte experts
 - Best practice



What gives me confidence as a Governor:

- Focus groups with students every year
 - Sampling themes
 - Do students feel safe?
 - Helping hand – 5 key members of staff
 - Bullying? Online?
 - Mental health
 - Action plan
 - Form tutor check ins
 - Corridors
 - Kindness



What gives me confidence as a Governor:

- Filtering and Monitoring
 - KCSIE theme for last few years
 - Have attended meetings with ICT team and DSL
 - Confidence in Lgfl filtering systems?
 - School processes regarding prohibited website
 - Phishing emails
- Staff wellbeing
 - Analysis of survey
 - Questions included safeguarding; work/life balance; mental health

Sharing best practice

- Please share best practice from your school



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