

24/03/2022

Dear Parents and Carers

**Re: Safeguarding lessons from the 'Child Q' Serious Case Review**

I am writing to you about a shocking incident that happened in another school that has been in the media recently. You may have heard or read about 'Child Q', a girl who was subjected to a degrading strip search by police at a secondary school in Hackney. The case review published last week included findings that

- 'school staff had an insufficient focus on the safeguarding needs of Child Q when responding to concerns about suspected drug use' and that
- 'racism (whether deliberate or not) was likely to have been an influencing factor in the [police] decision to undertake a strip search'.

The link to the full report is [here](#)

I am sure that many parents, carers, and families will have been horrified by this, especially as schools are a place where we expect our children to be safe and cared for. As a parent myself, I cannot put into words how I would be feeling if 'Child Q' was my daughter, or one of my extended family. I also understand that hearing or reading about someone else's experiences of racism is likely to affect more deeply those who themselves experience racism in their daily life.

I want to assure you that our Safeguarding Team, led by Ms Collier, is absolutely clear that safeguarding the children in our care, your children, is our absolute priority. If a situation like this arose in our school, the needs of the vulnerable child would be first and foremost in our minds, and we would act accordingly.

However, it would be too complacent to simply say 'it couldn't happen here' even though that is what I wholeheartedly believe. I am working with the Director of Education, Council leaders and other headteachers to revisit staff training and guidance to ensure that all staff in all schools

- feel confident that their duty to safeguard the children in our care comes above any other need,
- feel able to challenge other figures of authority if they feel a child is not being treated fairly or appropriately
- understand, and can counteract, assumptions that may lead to children being treated unfairly or unjustly
- are able act as 'appropriate adults' to protect children in crisis as if they were our own, seeking senior leader support if needed

Our Safeguarding Link Governor, who is also Chair of Governors, has been fully briefed on the issue and will be visiting the school just after the Easter break to review school safeguarding procedures with Ms Collier, Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### Support in school

If your child has been affected by these issues and needs to talk about them further, please guide them to speak to Ms Collier. Whether they need to explore their understanding of what has happened, or support to deal with their emotions about it, Ms Collier knows the full range of support that we can provide.

### Support offered by Hackney

There is also a range of support to young people offered by Hackney

If you would like to talk to someone about how these recent events have made you feel, please speak with a Young Hackney worker. We will provide a space for you to talk and be heard, and if you need further support, we can put you in touch with someone who can help. Please drop in to any of our youth hubs – details can be found at [www.younghackney.org](http://www.younghackney.org).

You can also access [Kooth](#) online. Kooth is a free online counselling and emotional wellbeing support service for young people aged 11-19 in City and Hackney. Kooth has no referrals or waiting lists and young people can access it anonymously. It's open 365 days a year from noon to 10pm weekdays and from 6 to 10pm on Saturday and Sundays.

Alternatively, you can text [Shout](#), a 24/7 UK crisis text service available for times when people feel they need immediate support. Text the word 'SHOUT' to '85258' and you will be put in touch with a trained Crisis Volunteer (CV).

If you're over 18, you can access [Talk Changes](#). Talk Changes helps people aged 18+ with a wide range of worries, common mental health problems and emotional difficulties. They provide therapy and employment support to those who are registered with a GP in City and Hackney, or registered with an online GP service and living in the area.

I hope the above provides some reassurance, support and/or guidance at a very challenging time.

Yours sincerely



Kevin McDonnell  
Headteacher