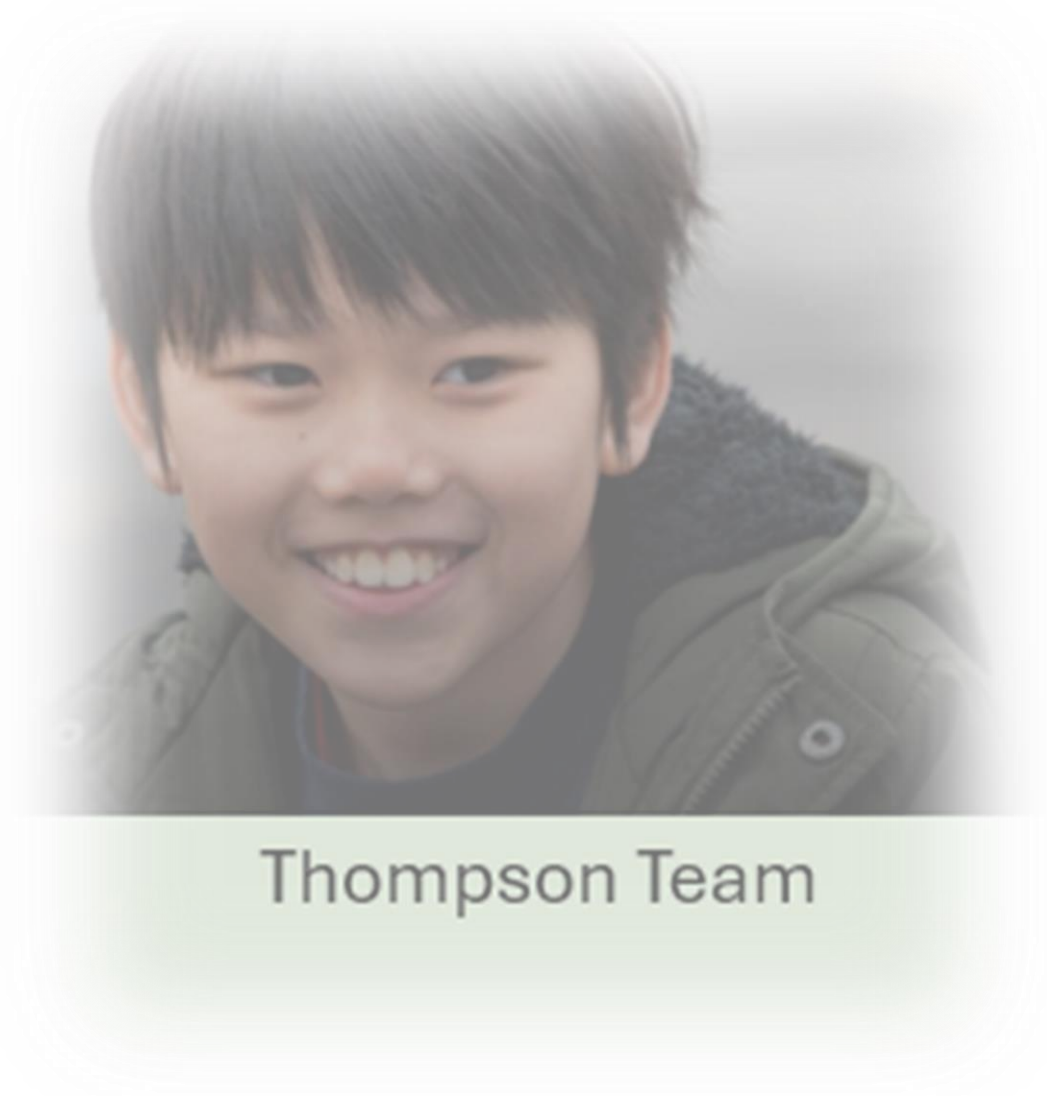
East Midlands Academy Trust
#EMATters

Annual Safeguarding Report

2023 – 2024



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1 Introduction

Thompson Team (TT), EMAT Independent Safeguarding Advisors, welcome you to the 2023-24 annual EMAT Safeguarding Report. EMAT and TT will also be referred to as we, our, us or the trust throughout the report. As with last year's safeguarding report, and alongside the updates provided to governors and trustees in local governance and trust board meetings, the 2023-24 report provides the Board of Trustees with:

- An overview of the local, regional and national context of safeguarding
- An overview of safeguarding practice within the Trust
- The Safeguarding Teams' achievements and developments over the academic year 2023-24
- Assurance that the Trust is meeting its statutory obligations with regard to safeguarding
- Future challenges and priorities

We understand our responsibility to ensure safeguarding is embedded in the organisational culture, strategy, policy and practice. All staff understand their role in safeguarding and know that they have a part to play in keeping children safe and free from harm. Regular safeguarding training and updates ensures that safeguarding is at forefront of what we do.

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Team at EMAT is made up of Governors, Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) and Senior Mental Health Leads (SMHLs). Those in these roles have undertaken additional training to assist them in their responsibilities to safeguard children. Those with responsibility for safeguarding work closely with HR and IT staff to ensure processes and procedures are tight and that communication is effective.

TT regularly report directly to the CEO (Josh Coleman) and Head of Education (John Lawson). This is done both informally as required and formally in a calendared meeting every 2 to 3 weeks.

2 National Context – Key challenges (2023-24)

There were a number of key national challenges in 2023-24 including the following aspects.

2.1 Recovery from the pandemic

Recovery from the pandemic continues to be a focus as the impact is still evident and will continue to be a focus for some time.

a. Mental health and wellbeing, including parents/ carers, colleagues and the wellbeing of young people.
b. Additional support for vulnerable children and families. This includes those who have witnessed and experienced domestic abuse and those facing financial hardship. The pandemic has increased the difficulties faced by these vulnerable young people.
c. There has been an increase in the number of referrals made to Children's Social Care and other agencies. Young people are often not able to access specialist support when needed and/or face long waiting times to access support.

2.2 Filtering and Monitoring Processes

Process and procedures for filtering and monitoring ICT use in school and on school devices have been a priority this academic year reflecting significant changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE).

In supporting the Designated Safeguarding Leads with their new lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place, TT worked closely with

EMAT IT team to develop a guidance document, evidencing processes across each of the 4 DfE filtering and monitoring standards and each of the 12 DfE cyber security standards.

3 Local Context

East Midlands Academy Trust consists of 7 schools, 5 primary, 1 secondary and 1 all through academy. 5 of the schools are located in Northamptonshire and 2 in Milton Keynes. Both Northampton and Milton Keynes are ethnically diverse districts. Ethnic minorities make up 21% of the population in Northampton, and 33% of the population in Milton Keynes. 28% of the population in Northampton and 30% of the population in Milton Keynes were born outside the UK. This is reflected in most of the academies with 44.8% of the pupils in EMAT Schools having English as an additional language (EAL). Northampton International Academy (61.9%), Castle Academy (68.4%) Shepherdswell Academy (60%) and Stimpson Avenue Academy (71%) have a significantly higher percentage of pupils with EAL than the National Average (17.5%). Hardingstone Academy (20.6%) and Orchard Academy (39.4%) are also above national figures for EAL with Prince William Academy (6.5%) being the only EMAT academy with lower than national percentages for EAL.

The number of in year pupil mobility for both leavers and admissions is higher than national. This is reflected in terms of stability of the cohort. The National stability percentage of85.8% is lower across EMAT schools at 81%. Castle Academy (66.6%), Northampton International Academy (72%) and Shepherdswell Academy (74%) having the lowest stability of schools across the Trust. The largest reason for pupils leaving these academies is families returning to home countries and likewise, a significant number of admissions are families new to the country.

Northampton and Milton Keynes have the lowest average household income, qualification levels and general health. The percentage of disadvantaged learners across EMAT schools is 21.8% which is below the national Average of 26%. However, Orchard Academy have a significantly high percentage of disadvantaged pupils (47.4%).

The proportion of learners receiving SEND support 17.5% above national figures which are 11.9%.

The crime rate in Northampton (42.4 per 1,000 people) and in Milton Keynes (38.9 per 1,000 people) is lower than national figures of 89.7 per 1,000 people. However, violent crime in the communities served by EMAT schools is slightly higher than national figures (Northampton 38.6, Milton Keynes 37.6 and National Average 35.4 per 1,000 people). The most common crimes in the areas are violence, sexual offences, and anti-social behaviour. There are known gangs operating in the catchment area of a number of EMAT schools. The use of recreational drugs is also prevalent across the catchment areas.

As we know, these factors are known contextual vulnerabilities for young people and increase the risk of both familial and extra familial harm. In addition to the professional development programme for staff and the curriculum offer which supports young people to learn how to keep themselves safe, EMAT schools work closely with the safeguarding partners (Social Care, Police and the Local Authorities) to help protect pupils from harm.

4 Governance Arrangements for Safeguarding

KCSiE refers to the safeguarding policies and procedures that governing boards should ensure the school has in place. Central to this is an effective Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which refers to locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. TT work collaboratively with school leaders and DSLs across all EMAT settings to regularly update the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy template to ensure it is up-to-date with current EMAT practices and national legislation and guidance. When changes have been made, Trustees have ratified the policy. The central Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy template is refined by DSLs to reflect their school context and local safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding Policies for all EMAT schools can be found on the individual

school websites. EMAT governance, Trustees and TT regularly check to ensure that the safeguarding policies housed on school websites are current. The last major amendment to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy took place in September 2023 to reflect changes in statutory legislation. Minor changes have taken place throughout the academic year to reflect internal changes relating to roles and responsibilities.

As safeguarding is embedded across all aspects of schools, safeguarding is also embedded into other relevant policies. Safeguarding updates made to other relevant policies are outlined in Section 8.

5 Sharing information with Governors and Trustees

School Leaders present safeguarding information to governors as a regular agenda item at Local Advisory Board (LAB) meetings. Throughout the academic year, TT provides Trustees with safeguarding information formally through reports presented at Trust Board meetings. Data presented at Board meetings is taken from half termly performance reports completed by schools. This provides a formal opportunity to review data and information, question safeguarding practices across the Trust, ensure effectiveness of safeguarding practices and provide support and professional challenge on all aspects relating to safeguarding.

The Trustee with safeguarding responsibility, Fiona Wheeler, attends the Safeguarding Forum and Mental Health Working Party led by TT and all Trustees and Governors are invited and welcome to attend. The actions from these meetings alongside resources used are held centrally.

6 Key Priorities

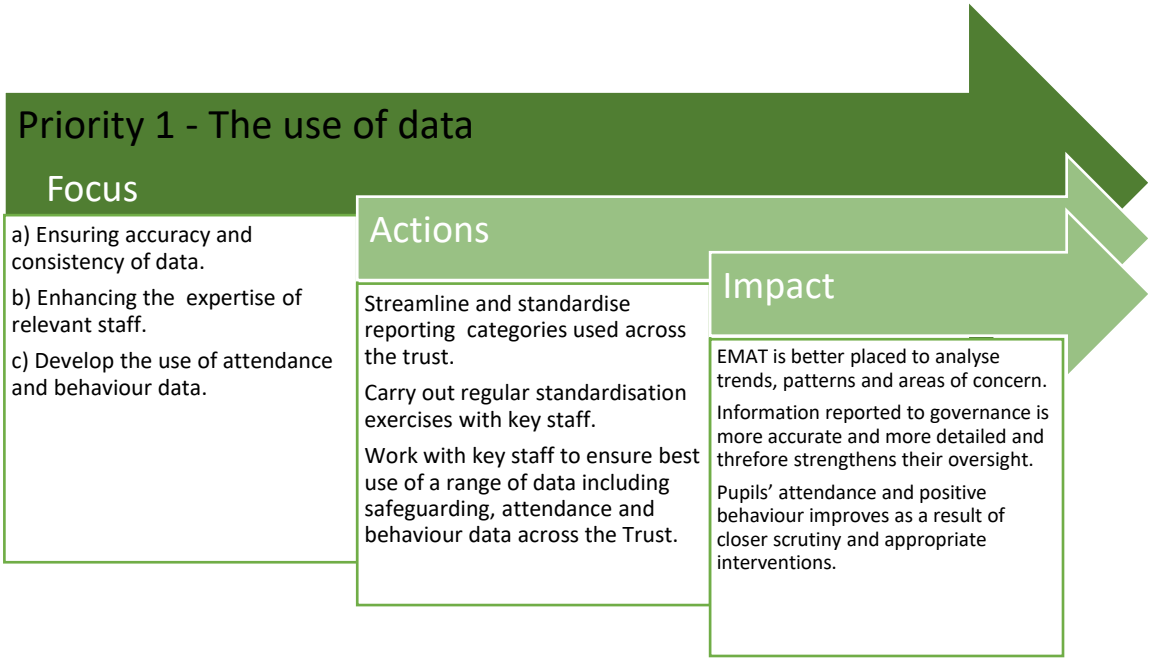
5 key priority areas for safeguarding 2023-2025 have been identified. These priorities have been laid out in the 'Safeguarding Strategy & Improvement Plan'. The plan has been developed with key staff, shared with key stakeholders and added to the Trust Improvement Plan. The 5 priority areas are:

Priority 1 - Further develop the more effective use of the standards and performance data
Priority 2 - Further develop collaborative approaches for safeguarding
Priority 3 - Refine quality assurance systems and procedures to ensure rigorous to ensure consistent best practice processes are in place across the trust
Priority 4 - Check and ensure safeguarding is promoted effectively through the curriculum
Priority 5 - Ensure all staff receive effective staff training and professional development.

6.1 Priority 1 – The use of data

The half termly collection of personal development data is embedded into EMAT practices as are opportunities to question the data in preparation for and during the Safeguarding Forum. The use of this data and understanding of the context behind the data in order to support DSLs, provide appropriate, professional challenge and identify patterns in the data continues to be developed.

TT make extensive use of the Standards and Performance Reports which contain safeguarding data completed half termly by schools. This data is used to keep informed of key safeguarding aspects, to identify any areas of best practice to be shared across the Trust, to identify any areas of support or training needs across the Trust or in individual schools and as the basis of information sharing with Trust leaders including Governors and Trustees. Previous development consisted of developing the quality of information provided, developing how the information is reported to trust leaders and explore and develop how data is and can be used to develop processes and practices across the Trust.



TT have worked with key staff across each EMAT academy to identify the categories for reporting concerns in order to standardise these across the trust. Reducing the number of categories ensures accuracy in reporting and recording and enables tighter monitoring and identification of areas needing support, challenge and/or training. TT have met with the Safeguarding Company to ensure safe transition to the identified categories ensuring no information is lost during migration to the Trust wide reporting system.

DSLs met as a working work party led by TT to review features and use of MyConcern to ensure key staff were using MyConcern features appropriately, consistently and efficiently.

TT carries out regular standardisation and quality assurance exercises on MyConcern and aim to enhance this further in the academic year 2024-25. They aim to develop strategies to improve the use of data in schools and across the trust including CPD and school-based support. In addition, they have begun work on improving the use of safeguarding data in line manager meetings through coaching, modelling, supporting and formalising line manager meeting processes.

School leaders and TT use standards and performance data to provide appropriate professional challenge. Ensuring that leaders are clear on their safeguarding responsibilities, expectations and accountabilities in relation to their roles. They support school leaders and school attendance and behaviour leads to analyse trends and patterns in attendance and behaviour data (e.g. suspension, PEX, internal isolation, behaviour rewards). This enables school leaders to identify actions needed to bring about improvements, sharpens oversight, and strengthens understanding of reasons, barriers and safeguarding risks. TT also use this data to work with leaders and staff to identify the possible range of actions that could be taken and explore how the impact of these can be tracked.

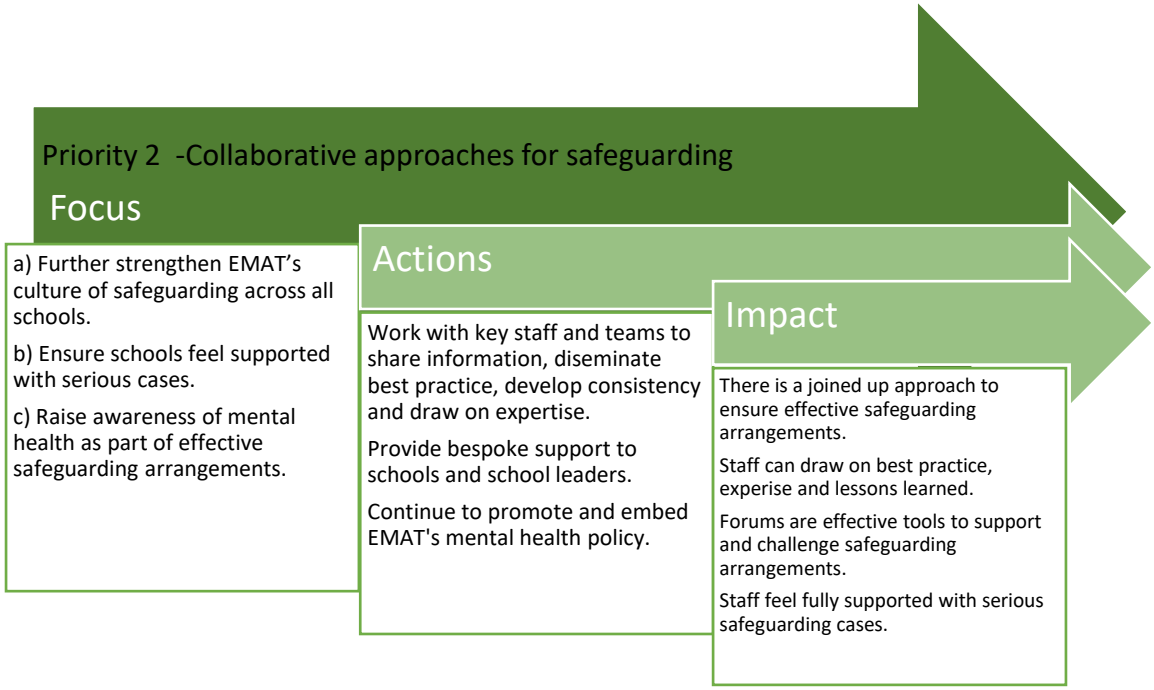
6.1.1 Next steps in the development of the use of data:

Future actions and priorities in terms of the use of data include:

- Ensuring accuracy and consistency of data including the data logged on MyConcern, the trust platform for reporting and recording safeguarding and child protection concerns.
- Enhancing the expertise of relevant staff in being able to evaluate the data relating to safeguarding.
- Develop the use of attendance and behaviour data to further support safeguarding.

6.2 Priority 2 - Collaborative approaches for safeguarding.

EMAT have always valued a collaborative approach, and this permeates into safeguarding practices. No single practitioner or team has the full overview of the child and therefore a collaborative approach is essential in safeguarding. In addition, the Trust has a wealth of experience across its schools in terms of staff expertise, information gleaned from lessons learned and best practice procedures.



TT work with individual schools to strengthen information sharing processes and establish links between key safeguarding areas e.g. DSLs, attendance, mental health, behaviour, SEND and curriculum. The links are also revisited in safeguarding forums, safeguarding training, EMAT meetings/conferences and in other working parties.

Forums and community groups are in place and are developing. For example, the safeguarding forum which is well established within the Trust. Also being developed are attendance leads/behaviour leads community groups to share expertise and build professional relationships, mutual support and professional challenge.

The safeguarding forum and mental health working party have been used as a tool to support and professionally challenge leaders and as a tool to strengthen good practice. These meetings have taken place at regular intervals throughout the year and have been scheduled for the academic year 2024-25.

TT continue to work with and support school leaders, DSLs and all other relevant leaders to share best practice in terms of approaches, strategies, systems, additional support and guidance that schools can draw upon to respond to serious cases. They provide bespoke support for schools to respond to serious cases through discussion of serious cases as they arise. In addition, TT provide mechanisms following serious cases to identify lessons learned and feedback to relevant leaders, including EMAT central team.

TT have work with the mental health working party and SMHLs to develop, promote and embed the Mental Health Policy and to ensure staff training and development in mental health (both adult and children) is provided. The focus of the working party in 2024-25 will be to develop the individual schools approach to mental health ensuring the Senior Mental Health Lead has full oversight and is able to develop existing interventions, enhance the current provision and measure the impact of interventions.

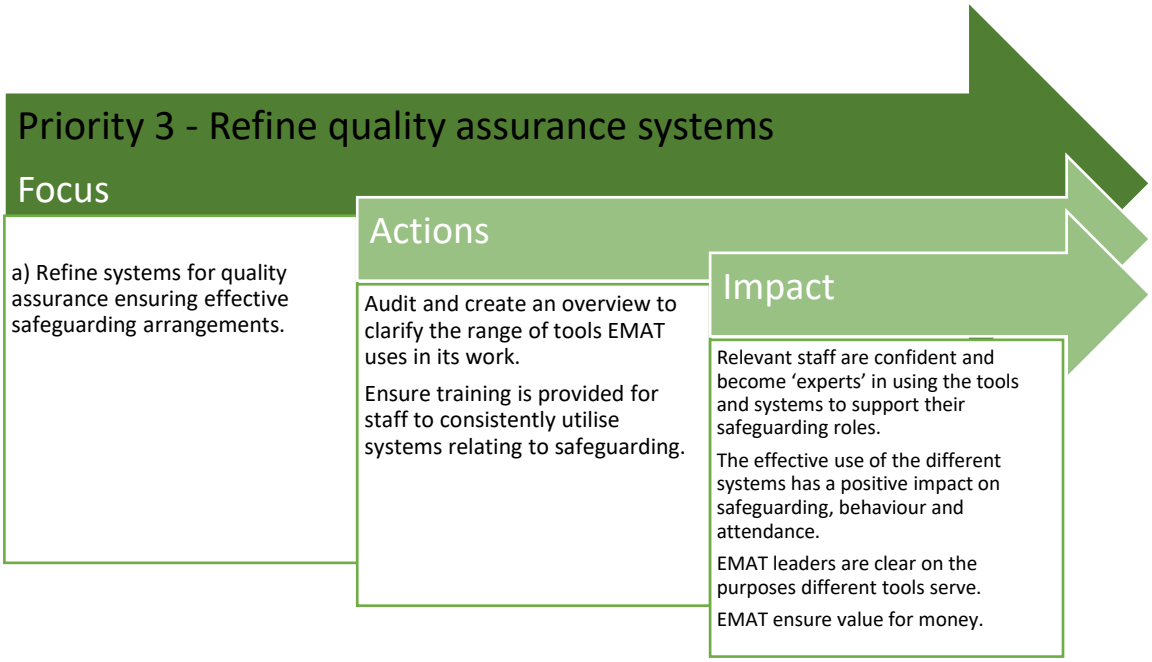
6.2.1 Next steps for development of collaborative approaches for safeguarding.

Actions and priorities in academic year 2024-25 include:

- TT to schedule half termly visits to all EMAT schools.
- Development of mental health interventions through the mental health working party.

6.3 Priority 3 - Quality assurance systems

In order to assure themselves of consistency and quality, Trust Leaders have developed Quality Assurance (QA) processes and practices. These include checks at all levels and by all leaders, for example, Link Governor and Trustee visits to schools, safeguarding audits and safeguarding forums/working parties. TT and EMAT leaders are continually adapting and refining QA tools and processes to ensure they provide the highest quality support and professional challenge to schools.



EMAT Leaders have explored and audited the tools used and are creating an overview to clarify the range of tools EMAT uses in its work to ensure they best tools are consistently in place to support safeguarding arrangements. The Trust has adopted Arbor as its centralised data system. Arbor assists with gathering, organising, processing and storing school data. Training has been provided to ensure staff are not only using Arbor effectively but that it is used in the most efficient ways. Training and support for Arbor is ongoing.

Similarly, other cloud based platforms such as SAMPeople are being embedded with ongoing support and training

Annual audits for safeguarding take place for each school and this results in an action plan for schools. TT monitors the actions from these audits. In addition, TT conducts QA activities alongside

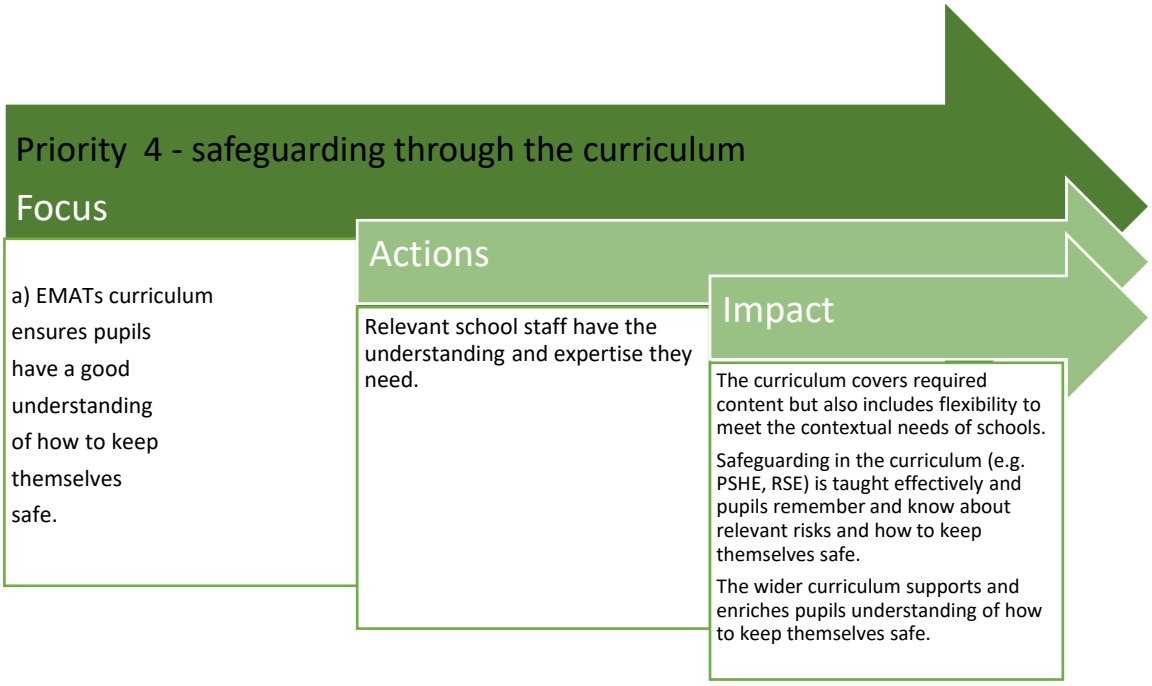
Trust leaders to ensure records on MyConcern, the school safeguarding reporting and recording platform, are accurate and thorough.

6.3.1 Next Steps in refining quality assurance systems

- TT scheduled visits to schools half termly to undertake QA activities with DSLs and school leaders.
- Continued support and professional challenge to take place and refinements to be made as needed.

6.4 Priority 4 - Safeguarding through the curriculum

At EMAT, the PSHE curriculum enables pupils to acquire knowledge, understanding, and skills that significantly impact personal development, behaviour, and welfare, and equips every child with the knowledge and skills required to keep themselves safe.



EMAT's culture of safeguarding is promoted through the curriculum. EMAT's PSHE curriculum content includes the requirement of our schools to teach pupils an age-appropriate understanding the fundamental British values which includes the importance of respecting others, the protected characteristics.

Our curriculum teaches pupils to understand different risks and how to keep themselves safe.

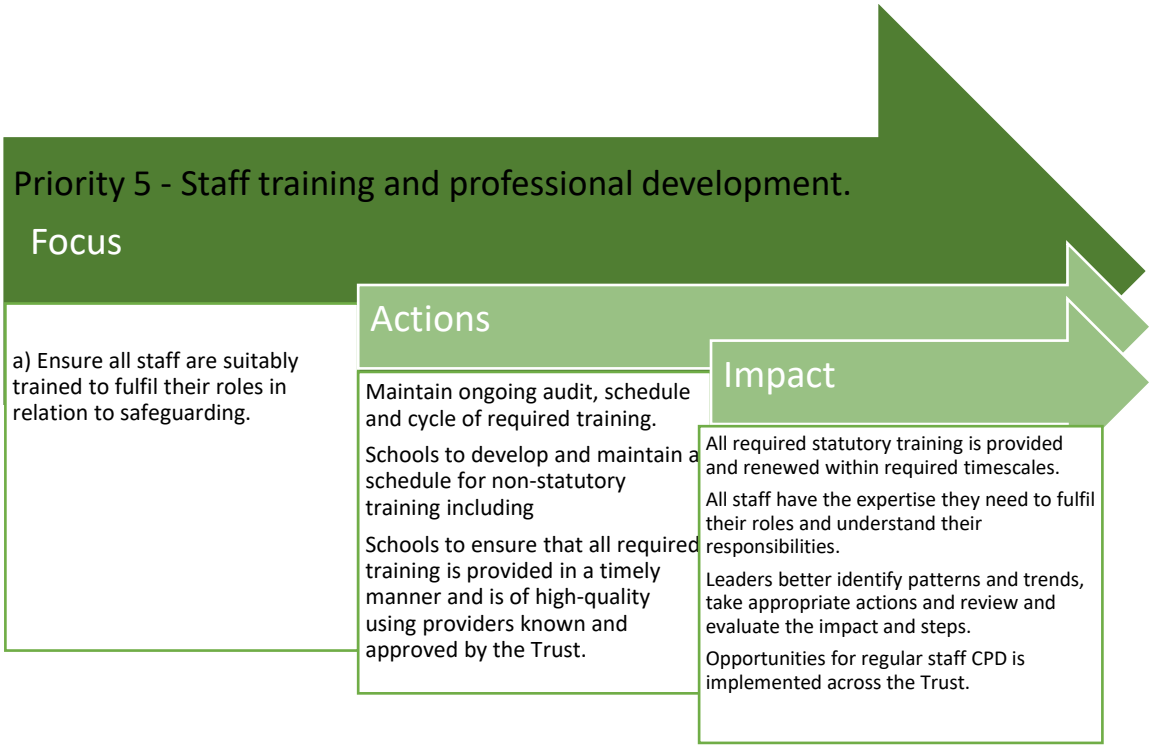
Schools adapt the curriculum to teach pupils about specific school contextual factors.

6.4.1 Next steps for safeguarding through the curriculum

The impact of the curriculum is, and will continue to be, monitored and evaluated through our school performance reports in relation to behaviour and bullying, through school annual reviews and pupil interviews. Actions will be taken as required either across the Trust or bespoke to individual schools as required.

6.5 Priority 5 - Staff training and professional development.

Staff training and development is essential in order to ensure that all teachers and school staff are compliant with statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding arrangements. Staff training in safeguarding matters also increases staff's confidence in dealing with safeguarding issues.



Safeguarding leads and school leaders to maintain ongoing audit, schedule and cycle of required training for compliance, developing practice and identified needs. This ensures that all compulsory training takes place as needed and in a timely way. All training is provided by high-quality providers known and approved by the Trust.

EMAT buy into quality training with the National College and all staff have access to this training. Staff are directed to training modules on National College as well as being able to access materials for their own professional development.

In addition, TT have developed training materials which have been shared and/or delivered to staff across all settings. This is to ensure that:

- All staff accessed quality safeguarding training.
- Safeguarding updates are delivered regularly to staff.
- Updates to statutory safeguarding legislation had been shared.
- All staff received a consistent message across all EMAT settings.
- Key areas/messages have been addressed across all settings and/or where there is a need for training.
- Key staff have appropriate training relevant to their needs and roles.

Staff Training Log 2023-2024 (Safeguarding)				
Training produced by Thompson Team	Delivered to	Delivered by	Date	Notes
Full Core training	Core Team	Thompson Team	September 2023	This provided refresher training and updates to KCSiE
Governor and Trustee training	All Governors and Trustees	Thompson Team	September 2023	Live training was delivered for all Governors
Safeguarding Governor training	Safeguarding Governors	Thompson Team	October 2023	This focussed on reading school data provided on the Trust reports, the filtering and monitoring guidance document and how to provide strategic support and challenge to schools
Governor Safeguarding induction Training	New Governors	Thompson Team (online, self-paced module)	Available as required	TT produced a self-paced module and quiz for safeguarding governors new to role in year to complete
Annual safeguarding update – including changes to statutory legislation	All School Staff	Safeguarding Leads across settings	September 2023	This was delivered across all settings and is used as an induction tool for new staff
Bitesize Module – Filtering and Monitoring and Online safety	All School Staff	Safeguarding Leads across settings	November 2023	This module was sent to DSLs for them to deliver in their settings
Bitesize Module – Prevent Awareness training	All School Staff	Safeguarding Leads across settings	March 2024	This module was sent to DSLs for them to deliver in their settings.
Bitesize Module – Financially motivated sexual extortion training	All School Staff	Safeguarding Leads across settings	June 2024	This module was sent to DSLs for them to deliver in their settings.
Senior Mental Health Leads	Senior Mental Health Leads	Thompson Team	September 2023 –	To ensure all EMAT schools have a fully trained SMHL in each school
Code of Conduct Training	All school staff	Thompson Team	Ongoing through the year – delivered in each of the schools	To ensure all staff understand EMAT code of conduct and professional responsibilities
DSL Level 3 safeguarding training	New DSL's	Thompson Team	November 2023 February 2024 July 2024	To ensure there are suitably qualified DSL's in each EMAT setting

DSL Level 3 safeguarding refresher training	DSL's	Thompson Team	September 2023 February 2024 April 2024	Refresher training to ensure all DSL's have up to date Level 3 DSL training

6.5.1 Next steps for staff training and development

- Cover all statutory training needs in relation to safeguarding
- Changes to legislation and guidance
- Educational trips and visits

7 Alternative Provision

EMAT's curriculum is inclusive and accessible and enables all pupils to succeed, while recognising the need to offer alternative provision that allows some pupils to achieve their potential outside of what is accessible in mainstream education.

To facilitate alternative learning pathways which are suitable for individual pupil needs, it is sometimes appropriate to work with different local providers to help pupils who are not reaching their potential in a school-based environment.

TT has reviewed commissioning arrangements across the Trust and has developed Alternative Provision Commissioning Arrangements guidance to ensure that:

- There is a clear rationale (as demonstrated through pupils' Individual Learning Plans) in place to guarantee that the provision will enable pupils to make good progress.
- There is a robust, ongoing process of quality assurance to ensure that providers commissioned meet EMAT expectations and requirements.
- There is a clear outline of responsibilities of all parties involved.
- There is a consistent approach to commissioning alternative provision across all EMAT schools.
- Alternative provision results in secure outcomes and future pathways for our young people.

8 Mental Health

Good mental health is important for helping children and young people to develop and thrive as well as ensuring their readiness to learn. In the last four years, there has been an increase in the number of children in mental health crisis who need emergency support in the UK. This includes young people who are suicidal, severely depressed and who have an eating disorder. Referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in 2019 were 21,242. The number of referrals to CAMHS in 2023 increased to 32,521.

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people across the Trust continues to be a focus area. The total number of known mental health concerns across all settings is 99.

Agency referrals are made for:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts
- Eating Disorders
- Emotional Health / Low mood
- Anxiety

TT are assured trainers for DfE Senior Mental Health Lead training. They have delivered training across all EMAT schools. At least one Senior Mental Heath Lead has been trained in each school with most having two members of staff trained. A member of the EMAT central HR team has also undergone this training. All EMAT schools also have at least one member of staff trained as a Mental Health First Aider

The Mental Health Working Party is made up of Senior Mental Health Leads. The working party has developed the EMAT Mental Health Policy to support staff working with young people who display mental ill health in their schools. EMAT has an established partnership with NHS England to host a mental health support team at the NIA. This gives access to experts in child mental health and early proactive interventions around anxiety and self-harm, amongst others. This is also available to the other Northampton town schools. The partnership is exploring extending this to have another team based at Prince William School.

In terms of staff mental health and wellbeing, the EMAT HR Team have improved the employee wellbeing offer to include a new and improved Health and Wellbeing service to EMAT employees through Vivup. This is accessed through the 'Your Care Wellbeing' section of the Vivup website and provides staff with assessment tools for their health and wellbeing as well a wide range of wellbeing resources. Employees can also access 24 hour online GP appointments and a free 24/7 confidential helpline that provides access to counselling and other support.

Additionally, as part of the Vivup offer, EMAT employees are able to access subsidised gym membership alongside travel and leisure benefits to further support their health and wellbeing.

8.1.1 Next Steps for mental health and wellbeing

- Develop the mental health pages on school websites.
- Develop links with the embedded NHS MHST at the NIA to help build capacity
- Work with the mental health working party and Senior Mental Health Leads on systems to effectively track interventions and monitor impact for those struggling with mental ill health.
- Ensure staff training and development in mental health (both adult and children) continues to be provided.
- Continue to embed the new policy and adapt where needed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

9 Supervision

TT provide regular supervision for staff in key safeguarding roles. This includes Headteachers, DSLs, DDSLs, SENDCOs and Mental Health Leads. These sessions are optional but the uptake is good with 6 schools having allocated staff accessing supervision regularly and 1 school (PWS) preferring sessions as required. In addition, supervision sessions are offered on an 'ad hock' basis for any staff who are referred to TT or following an incident where a session would support that member of staff.

10 Supporting Schools with serious Safeguarding Cases

TT support schools with serious safeguarding cases through sharing best practice and providing professional support and challenge.

Professional relationships are well developed and enable schools to contact TT to talk through serious cases. This may be done by their own choice of they may be directed to discuss cases by the CEO, the Head of Education, HR or their Executive Headteacher.

This ensures consistency and quality of decision making across the Trust with regards to referring cases that meet the thresholds for Children's Social Care involvement and also cases that do not

meet threshold but require further monitoring or referral to alternative external agencies for professional support. DSL's, DDSL's, Headteachers and Executive Headteachers have reported that the additional support provides reassurance and confidence in their own decision making processes. These cases have often been used within individual school settings to provide additional staff training where needed.

11 Looking Forward – Academic Year 2024-25

TT and safeguarding leads will continue to work on the 5 key priority areas for safeguarding 2023-2025 developing the next steps identified within this report:

- Priority 1 - Further develop the more effective use of the standards and performance data.
- Priority 2 - Further develop collaborative approaches for safeguarding.
- Priority 3 - Refine quality assurance systems and procedures to ensure rigorous to ensure consistent best practice processes are in place across the trust.
- Priority 4 - Check and ensure safeguarding is promoted effectively through the curriculum.
- Priority 5 - Ensure all staff receive effective staff training and professional development.