

March 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you following the recent media coverage regarding Child Q. Just like us, we are sure you are shocked and appalled by the experience Child Q suffered at her school. The findings of the independent investigation into what happened make for unpleasant reading and it is clear that there were safeguarding failings from those who should have protected her. We contact you to reassure you of our school practice, remind you of how we work and let you know of actions we will take following this incident.

The welfare and safeguarding of our students is our number one priority. As a diverse, and inclusive community school we recognise the duty we have to provide a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for all our young people.

All of our staff have received safeguarding training recently and do so annually. We also have a dedicated, experienced and knowledgeable child protection team and our senior team and heads of year are level 3 accredited safeguarding trained. We work alongside all students and families and provide strong support for those who most need it.

As is the case in many schools we also have a safer schools officer who we work closely with: PC Sue Randall. PC Randall has worked at the school for over a decade on a part time basis, and in that time, has provided guidance, support and advice for our students and families. Her role is wide ranging and includes delivering assemblies, running holiday clubs and police cadets. She is well known by staff and students alike.

PC Randall is our first port of call for any issues where police involvement may be required. This could be for myriad reasons and is often employed as a supportive measure. She is familiar with our school staff, systems and our school ethos and works in collaboration with the Safeguarding team regarding decisions and police processes. Therefore, the first police officer involved- unless it is a 999 emergency - is someone children and staff already know. We never forget in this process that our responsibility as a school is to protect the child and we refer to 'when to call the police' document by the NPCC as a guide to any actions taken.

Another of the findings from the investigation is that the school did not contact child Q's parents at any point. This is disturbing. As a school we work hard to develop relationships with parents; we talk to parents frequently about the school and their child and are committed to further deepening our lines of communication. We must make sure that we have your up to date contact details at all times by emailing post@thenorwoodschool.org.

Aside from the role of police in schools, the role of 'appropriate adult' has come under question as a result of Child Q's experience. Members of our child protection team have taken this role on a number of occasions on behalf of our children. With this report, we are keen to ensure more staff are trained in the role of 'appropriate adult' and understand the implications when the police are involved. We will be taking action to secure this further training and widen it to include more staff.

Soon we will be using our usual pastoral processes to address the issues arising from Child Q's case with our students - sensitively but with a view to informing and reassuring them regarding our own school procedures. It is important that they know about appropriate adults and their rights in such situations.

Police support in informing our students of the law, how to deal with difficult issues and how best to protect themselves from harm, is valuable. Above all we want to reassure you that our work with the police, in whatever capacity, is done mindfully, with consideration and in line with established guidance and policy.

We hope that we have addressed any questions or concerns you may have following the media coverage of Child Q. You can find copies of our safeguarding protocol and policies [on our website](#).

We all have lessons to learn from Child Q's case and we seek to improve our already established safeguarding processes in the light of it. Our thoughts are with her and her family in what is an incredibly difficult time.

Kind regards,

Niki Clemenger and Richard Cole
Interim Head teachers