



Paul Murphy: "Unless safeguarding runs like a main artery through all that we do, we will not be effective in delivering students who are the best that they can be"

## In good hands

Paul Murphy tells us about E21C's approach to safeguarding in their schools

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E21C is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with four schools - two secondary and two primary. We work closely together in the London Borough of Bromley and have been in existence for four years. The governance structure allows for Local Governing Bodies, supported by an experienced and expert group of Directors who form the Board of Directors. In total, the Trust is responsible for the education and welfare of approximately 3,500 students.

The Trust is based on a set of non-negotiables that define what an excellent education should look like in the 21st Century. At the heart is the 'whole child', ensuring that every child matters both in terms of examination outcomes, but also in terms of who they are as young people - ready, willing and able to be leaders in the 21st century society.

We believe that unless every child is properly safeguarded, we cannot meet our motto: "To be the best you can be." A child who is suffering from any form of abuse cannot truly be at their best and it is incumbent on all staff to ensure that safeguarding is our central concern. When asked: "Who is responsible for safeguarding children in E21C?" The answer is simple: "Everyone is responsible."

To enact this vision across multiple schools is both exciting and challenging. E21C has clear structures in place to meet our central commitment to safeguarding every child in our care. The structures go from the Board of Directors, to the Local Governing Bodies and to the daily operation of our safeguarding philosophy in all of our schools. We believe that unless safeguarding runs like a main artery through all that we do, we will not be effective in delivering students who are the best that they can be.

As a MAT, safeguarding begins at a strategic level. This means that we have a director of the Trust whose sole responsibility is safeguarding. This director ensures the Trust is always totally up to date with the multivarious and ever growing requirements placed upon schools to ensure that all students are properly safeguarded. The director receives regular continuing professional development (CPD) by attending both local and national CPD events.

The director for safeguarding is also responsible for ensuring that the Trust's 'Minimum Expected Standards' for safeguarding are fully compliant with requirements and, importantly, represent best practice that goes beyond the requirements of regulatory bodies. They are supported in this role by an annual review of the safeguarding MES that is conducted in conjunction with independent, senior consultants in the field of safeguarding. This is usually an HMI or an Ofsted inspector.

Each school in the Trust is audited annually against the MES for safeguarding. These audits are led by the director of safeguarding and supported by other senior education professionals such as serving deputy heads, headteachers and/or education consultants experienced in the field of safeguarding. If an audit of the safeguarding MES reveals any areas for improvement, the board will intervene directly to enact the necessary improvement.

The board of directors receives a composite report about safeguarding at each meeting and each Local Governing Body receives a school specific report at each meeting. By doing this we ensure that safeguarding is always a top priority at every meeting of the Trust's Governance Structure.

Each school in the Trust has at least one (usually more) Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). The DSOs have annual training to ensure they are totally up to date. The DSO is always a member of the Leadership team and has safeguarding as a main responsibility. All staff in the Trust receive annual updates on safeguarding from the DSOs and staff that join a Trust school at any point in the academic year receive comprehensive safeguarding induction. The Trust's DSOs meet regularly to discuss common themes and areas of concern as well as to share best practice and further develop the corporate view of our safeguarding function.

To safeguard all students across a Multi-Academy Trust is based upon having safeguarding as a core aim and then ensuring that there is a strong, robust governance structure to support the practical implications of day to day safeguarding in the complex, fast changing environments that schools are.

Paul Murphy is CEO of E21C and Headteacher at The Ravensbourne School: [www.e21c.co.uk](http://www.e21c.co.uk)

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