

### Circumstances

Harlow Academy (now renamed Fountaindale) is a special school for some of the most vulnerable and disabled children, including children receiving end of life care and with severe physical disabilities. An Ofsted judgement that the school was inadequate in February 2020 led the DfE to make an academy order and find an academy sponsor, the Evolve Trust.

In Autumn 2021 incidents of concern were reported included inappropriate use of restraint, failure to provide equipment required to support children's mobility, poor management of behaviour and inappropriate exclusions. Despite agencies including Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner being made aware, no plan effectively addressed the multiple safeguarding concerns.

Harlow Academy was temporarily closed following an Ofsted inspection in January 2022 due to the conclusion that pupils were not being kept safe with some at risk of immediate or imminent harm.

### Links to National/ Themed Guidance

Full review - [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/child-safeguarding-practice-reviews)

National review with similar themes - [Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings](#)

### Agency specific learning

#### Department for Education

The DfE is revising its process for identifying academy sponsors for special schools.

### Partnership Learning Points

- Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) to consider the circumstances where concerns about children's care requires a **structured multi-agency response led by senior staff** in the partnership and which can give direction and authority to the work of the services working with individual children.
- The NSC partnership agencies should look at how intelligence could be routinely gathered and analysed across agencies from enquiries, complaints and referrals that might give **early warning of concerns** about organisations failing to effectively safeguard children.
- All NSC partnership staff working with children should be aware of **how to raise concerns** about the quality of children's care including how they can use their own or other agencies **whistle blowing process**.
- The NSC Partnership should **agree a document for parents and carers** that outlines how to raise concerns in relation to children with disabilities and what to do if these concerns are not responded to. This should include concerns about a child's school.
- NSC Partnership staff with particular safeguarding responsibilities should always consider **what other routes** they should explore when a referral about a child or about the behaviour of an adult does not meet the particular safeguarding criteria they use.

#### Ofsted

Ofsted are conducting a learning review and intend to use this review to inform their thinking.