

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission 8th July 2026
Child Safeguarding Practice Review - Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy
Questions for the Department of Education (Regulator of Academies)

Addressing non-cooperation with a Child Safeguarding Practice Review

1. The City & Hackney Child Safeguarding Partnership's (CHSCP) experience with Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy (MVPA) in conducting the child safeguarding practice review (CSPR) was noted to be "adversarial" where the school engaged legal representatives to manage safeguarding correspondence, delayed in providing key data and the commissioned a competing review by Kings Counsel..
 - a) Does the Department for Education (DfE) consider this conduct of MVPA to be acceptable from a "relevant agency"?
 - b) What concrete, enforceable sanctions will the DfE introduce to compel genuine, constructive engagement and timely information sharing from academy trusts during safeguarding reviews?
 - c) Will further guidance about compliance with safeguarding investigations be issued to Academies and Multi-Academy Trusts (or similar relevant agencies)?

Effective use of public funds

2. In response to the CHSC's safeguarding practice review, it has been reported that the Mossbourne Federation spent **£400,487** for legal representation, which included the appointment of King Counsel to conduct a competing review.
 - a) Does the DfE consider this an appropriate use of public money by the Mossbourne Federation?
 - b) In light of the above, will further guidance be issued by the DfE on appropriate use of public funding by the academy sector which it regulates?

Use of 'zero tolerance' approaches to behaviour management.

3. The CSPR highlighted the negative impact of the 'no excuses' model of behaviour management at MVPA where compliance and control is prioritised over all other considerations, a climate of 'healthy fear' is promoted through public reprimand (shouting and intimidation) and a failure differentiate policies to underlying causes of behavior (trauma, mental health difficulties, or neurodiversity). This led the CSPR to conclude that the "No Excuses" model was being delivered as a zero-tolerance policy of "punishment no matter what" and which ultimately led to "trauma for a significant minority of vulnerable pupils".
 - a) What is the response of the DfE to the conclusions of the CSPR on the use of 'No excuses' model of behaviour management at MVPA?
 - b) In light of these findings, will the DfE review advice and guidance to academies (and all schools) about the use of 'Zero tolerance' approaches to behaviour management in schools?

Oversight of improvement

4. The DfE stated it will "establish a framework to review the implementation of changes" at Mossbourne Federation.
 - a) What are the specific milestones and deadlines within this framework?
 - b) What immediate, mandatory interventions or sanctions will the DfE deploy if the academy or Federation fails to deliver a comprehensive programme of change within specified timelines?

- c) How will pupils, families and the local community know that MVPA has implemented the recommendations of the CSPR in full?

Accountability Gap

5. In the CHSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review, Sir Alan Wood noted the "significant gap" (lacunae) in the accountability structure for all schools (maintained, academy, and church schools), and argued for a singular, consistent approach.
 - a) Does the DfE explicitly acknowledge this accountability gap for schools?
 - b) How will the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 specifically address the current lack of direct local levers for Local Authorities to exercise meaningful oversight and intervention in academies where cumulative safeguarding risk is evident?

Complaints Analysis

6. The DfE confirmed that its Regions Group (RG) and Ofsted currently have separate processes for handling complaints and information is shared on a "case-by-case basis".
 - a) What action will the DfE take to create a single, shared, and systematic mechanism for collating and analysing complaint and concern data from all routes (DfE, Ofsted, Local Authority, School) to ensure cumulative risk patterns—like those seen at MVPA—are detected early, rather than after long-term harm has accumulated?

Disproportionate impact of behaviour policies

7. Black Caribbean and Black African boys, as well as children with SEND, were found to be four or five times more likely to be placed in the Behavioural Support Unit at MVPA which lacked specialist behaviour input and functioned primarily as 'containment unit' rather than providing rehabilitative support.
 - a) What specific mandatory requirements and enforcement measures will the DfE introduce to ensure academy governing boards (and school governing bodies in general) actively scrutinise the impact of behaviour policies and act upon any inequalities identified?
 - b) Will additional advice be provided to Ofsted to ensure that it assesses disproportional impact on pupils arising from the application of school behaviour management processes in their inspection framework?

Pupil retention loss and 'off-rolling'

8. The CSPR of MVPA identified significant concerns about 'higher retention loss' at the academy noting that the percentage of Year 7 pupils who do not remain at MVPA to complete in Year 11 rose sharply to 22.1% in 2024. The CSPR also noted that MVPA three-year average retention loss rate of 18.3% is substantially higher than the England national average of approximately 7%. Despite this issue being identified by Ofsted, the high pupil loss was not followed up in subsequent inspections, and MVPA was continued to be assessed as 'outstanding'.
 - a) How can the removal of 1 in 5 of children from school 'be in the best interests of the child' and the school continue to be assessed as 'outstanding'?
 - b) What sanctions are in place when schools are identified to have off-rolled pupils?
 - c) Will the DfE review the guidance to Ofsted on the identification of off-rolling at schools and how this will impact the subsequent grading of schools?

Use of Informal Exclusions and Safeguards

9. The CSPP of MVPA conducted by Sir Alan Wood, highlighted numerous problems associated with the use of informal exclusion processes (e.g. deskings) and the lack of data and accountability for the use of such processes. Given that MVPA's practice of "deskings" was found to contravene DfE guidance on behaviour management:
- Will the DfE update statutory guidance to explicitly prohibit or severely limit the use of such informal exclusion methods?
 - Will the DfE mandate the data collection on all forms of internal and informal exclusion (e.g., "deskings," or removal of children from the classroom)?

Toilet policy

10. The pupil toilet policy of the MVPA was the subject of numerous parent complaints which contributed to the decision for the CHSCP to conduct a CSPP. In its investigation, the SCPP noted that pupils were required to make up time after school for necessary toilet breaks irrespective of additional health or other needs.
- Does the DfE consider this policy as lawful, proportionate, and compliant with a school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and safeguarding principles, especially concerning menstruating pupils or those with medical conditions?
 - If not, what immediate action will the DfE take to ensure this punitive practice ceases at MVPA and is explicitly addressed in national guidance?
11. On the **24th January 2023**, Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy was rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted with no safeguarding concerns identified.
- On the **9th December 2025**, the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership published its Child Safeguarding Practice Review of Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy highlighting serious concerns about harmful disciplinary practices and the disproportionate impact that behaviour management was having on children with special educational needs, black and global majority pupils and other vulnerable children at the school.
- On 23rd January 2026** the [Secretary of State](#) for Education wrote to Mossbourne Victoria Park praising the academy for its achievements and encouraging it to take up a role as a systems leader for disadvantaged pupils.
- On **5th February 2026**, Hackney Area SEND inspection (Ofsted & CQC) noted '*The rate of permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND in secondary schools is high and has been for too long*' and '*There is more to do to make sure that all schools in the local area, particularly those in the secondary phase, develop more inclusive approaches*'.
- How will the DfE address the lack of consistency and coherence in the regulatory and inspection framework for secondary schools in Hackney and improve public confidence local schools are inclusive?
 - What additional powers will the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 bring to local authorities (*who have best knowledge of local education systems*) to help maintain oversight and accountability of *all* local schools to ensure compliance with requirements on inclusion, safeguarding and pupil wellbeing?

*The Commission would be grateful if responses could be provided by **Tuesday 30th June 2026** for statutory publication deadline for the meeting on the 8th July 2026.*