

Walford & North Shropshire College

Safeguarding reinspection report

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Type of provider: General further education college

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Introduction

1. Walford and North Shropshire is a small general further education college with two main sites - a main campus in Oswestry and a second site at Baschurch specialising in land-based education and training. The majority of the college's learners come from Shropshire with a small proportion from neighbouring counties and Wales. The college offers courses in all subject areas, but has small numbers in several of them.
2. Shropshire is a rural and sparsely populated county. Almost all of the population is of White British heritage and a high proportion is aged over 50. The college is the county's main provider of adult and community education, which is based in over 50 external venues. Shropshire's socio-economic environment is generally favourable, although pockets of deprivation exist in the more rural areas. Unemployment is below regional and national levels. The percentage of pupils leaving school with more than five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, is notably higher than the national or regional average. The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds not in employment, education or training is relatively low.

Context

3. At the last full inspection of the college, in April 2010, overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory. Outcomes, quality of provision, leadership & management, capacity to improve and equality and diversity were satisfactory. Of the two subject areas inspected, one was judged to be good and the other satisfactory. Safeguarding was inadequate because criminal record bureau (CRB) checks had not been completed for several active teachers and there was insufficient adherence to the risk assessments put in place to manage this situation.
4. The purpose of this inspection is to reinspect and report on safeguarding.

The outcome of the reinspection is as follows:

Aspect	Original grade	Reinspection grade
Safeguarding	4	3

Key findings

- Governors and the Principal have taken appropriate action to respond to the issues raised at the last inspection. The gaps identified in the CRB checks of teachers were resolved as quickly as national vetting procedures allowed and a much stronger monitoring regime has been put into place.
- The single central record provides a comprehensive and reliable statement of all checks carried out on employed staff, external contractors, governors, students on placements and volunteers. On the rare occasions it is necessary for a newly appointed member of staff to take up post prior to CRB clearance, risk

assessment is carried out and chaperoning arrangements are put in place. Frequent spot checking by senior managers ensure close adherence to these arrangements.

- Governors now have a much keener understanding of the legal requirements for the vetting of staff and have developed a broader awareness of safeguarding issues. Safeguarding is now a standing agenda item at termly meetings of the quality and standards committee. The designated safeguarding governor has a good overview of the single central record and governors are better able to challenge senior managers effectively.
- The Principal has more direct oversight of the position regarding the vetting of staff. The senior leadership team receives weekly up-dates on the latest position in relation to CRB applications and are fully aware of any clearances pending.
- The college safeguarding team identify and take opportunities to promote specific aspects of safeguarding, including those specific to the local area, to staff and learners. However, the system of identity cards is not yet established or enforced sufficiently to realise its potential in providing an important, additional measure of security.
- Staff training in safeguarding has been accelerated since the inspection. At the time of reinspection, all staff and governors had completed level 1 training and the senior designated safeguarding officers had completed level 2 training and had qualified to train others in safeguarding.
- Students informed inspectors that they continue to feel safe at the college. Students on both the main campuses know to whom they should go for help and support in any safeguarding matter and are aware of the useful panic button on computers. They understand that activities and presentations have been designed to support their personal decision-making on safety aspects.
- All students value the support they receive from their personal tutor and recognise the importance of this role in helping them to identify if they could be at risk. While standard security processes operate across both campuses, the site at Oswestry is more contained and students appear more aware of security practices such as regular management patrols and the checking of identity cards.
- Health and safety continue to be promoted very effectively. A strong culture of continuous improvement coupled with termly inspections of health and safety arrangements in different areas of the college help to identify further areas for improvement. Risk assessments are thorough and increasingly involve learners in their completion.

What does Walford and North Shropshire College need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the higher levels of assurance established about the college's compliance with legal requirements by continuing to improve, analyse and evaluate the recording of recruitment and vetting checks and staff training,

including exception reporting, drawing on national guidance and sector best practice.

- Further raise the profile of safeguarding across the college so that all staff give learner safety their highest priority and help learners take more responsibility for their own safety by embedding the use of identity cards on college sites.

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