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Mike Sandeman
Headteacher
Arthur Mellows Village College
Helpston Road
Glington
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire PE6 7JX

Dear Mr Sandeman

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Arthur Mellows Village College

Following my visit with Daniel Burton, Her Majesty's Inspector, Russell Bennett, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Jacqueline Pentlow, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a no-notice monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at Arthur Mellows Village College.

Evidence

Ofsted have reviewed four complaints which raised concerns about how effectively incidents of bullying were handled at the college. The inspection team carried out a wide range of evidence gathering activities.

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, including the college's home/school communication log and minutes from governing body meetings. Inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, teachers and the Chair of both the Governing Body and the Academy Trust. Inspectors visited lessons at different times of the school day, and the special educational needs base. They observed break and lunchtimes, the end of the school day and movements around the college site, in order to assess effectiveness of the college's policies and systems for ensuring students' safety and wellbeing. They spoke throughout the day with individuals and groups of students and a range of ancillary staff. Inspectors took the views of parents into account.

They spoke with a few parents at the end of the school day, evaluated a school-based survey and considered notes from meetings and telephone conversations, along with letters kept in students' files. There were too few responses on Parent View for these to be considered.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Context

Arthur Mellows Village College is larger than the average-sized secondary school and serves a wide rural population, with many students travelling considerable distances to attend the college. The college converted to academy status in September 2010. There are 1586 students on roll. Most students are from White British backgrounds, with very few from other ethnic groups. A small number speak English as an additional language. A below-average proportion of students are eligible for the additional government funding known as the pupil premium. The proportions of students supported by school action plus and those with statements of special educational needs are both above the national average. A few students are looked after by the local authority or are subject to child protection plans. A small proportion of students in Key Stage 4 attend courses at local colleges.

Most teachers and leaders have taught at the college for some time. Similarly, most ancillary staff are long-serving members of staff. A deputy headteacher was seconded to the local authority in December 2012 and the college is in the process of appointing a new assistant headteacher.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The college's behaviour systems are well understood by students and staff. They report that standards of behaviour across the college are high. Students are rewarded for good behaviour and they view the sanctions for any behaviour that fall below expectations to be fair. Rewards and concerns are recorded and then tracked through the college's electronic system, 'I-behave'. Most concerns relating to behaviour are minor; more serious incidents are extremely rare.

Students are exceptionally positive about the college and they spoke with one voice about the high level of support they receive from the pastoral team. Students whose circumstances mean that they are potentially more vulnerable receive additional and very effective support through the learning support centre. Students are very clear that they feel safe and that relationships with staff are excellent. They say that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with effectively. They understand their responsibility to help each other, and say they would share concerns about a fellow student with the pastoral team. They are confident that the team would then ensure that appropriate support would be provided, for example from the school counsellor.

Most students attend well. They enjoy coming to the college and typically say that it is a good place to learn, reflecting their very positive attitudes to learning. The college tracks attendance carefully. Absence is followed up daily and, for those whose attendance falls below 85%, there is closer monitoring and additional support.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Evidence gathered in this inspection fully satisfied inspectors that effective arrangements are in place for safeguarding students. The school was not aware of the complaints made to Ofsted in 2012 and 2013 but takes all concerns raised by parents very seriously. Evidence from students' files and the college's safeguarding and communication logs indicate regular communication between college staff at all levels and parents.

Staff are well trained and take seriously their responsibility for ensuring students safety and wellbeing. They are very clear about their duty to pass on all concerns about safeguarding to the pastoral team and the college leaders with responsibility for child protection. Systems for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students are effective, including support for those who have identified special educational needs, those who are looked after by the local authority, and those who are supported through a child protection plan. Appropriate checks are made when new staff are appointed or volunteers used; these are recorded diligently in the college's single central register. All required safeguarding policies are in place. The college receives external advice from an education consultancy to help ensure that the policies and procedures meet current government requirements. The minutes from governing body meetings show that governors regularly review policies and monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. However, the policies do not always fully reflect the rigorous practices that take place in college each day to help ensure students' wellbeing and safety.

Leaders and other staff are vigilant in all areas of the college, including at break and lunchtimes, and the end of the school day. Leaders ensure that the pastoral and special educational needs teams are available to support students throughout the school day. Staff and students are confident in senior leaders and say that the college's behaviour management systems and support for students are fair and consistently well led. The school tracks the attendance, behaviour, welfare needs and achievements of students on an individual basis. Information is very regularly shared with relevant staff through effective communication systems, notably 'I-behave' and focused meetings. Child protection concerns are carefully logged, tracked and dealt with as needed. However, other data and college logs, such as attendance figures for different groups and the home/school communication log, are not sufficiently analysed for patterns and trends to ensure that leaders understand the overall picture and can use this to monitor and improve systems. Systems are in place to monitor the wellbeing and achievement of the few students who attend courses elsewhere.

The curriculum is carefully planned and regularly reviewed to ensure that students' personal, social and health education is delivered in a range of ways as they move through the school so they develop a secure awareness of how to stay safe. Students spoke highly of two-weekly life skills lessons and the regular special days which further address key topics such as drug awareness and road safety. A recent day focused on bullying. Students commented on how this had raised their awareness of cyber-bullying and how serious this and other types of bullying could be.

The parents who spoke with inspectors echoed students' views that the staff do all they can to provide a safe learning environment. They commented that staff have an open approach to sharing and discussing concerns, and work with parents to address them.

External support

The college has well-established links with a wide range of services, agencies and professionals, and works closely with them to support the specific needs of individual students. The college makes effective use of an education consultant provided, in particular, for help with human resources and policy advice.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that college policies fully reflect the strong practice seen in the day-to-day systems for ensuring the welfare, safety and wellbeing of students.
- Refine the systems for analysing all data relating to students' safeguarding, including attendance and behaviour tracking data and the communication log, so that college leaders have a better understanding of patterns and trends for different groups of students and the effectiveness of its policies.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, Director of Children's Services for Peterborough, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector