

Suffolk New College

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130820
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This was an unannounced monitoring inspection, which focused on leaders' and managers' safeguarding procedures for vulnerable learners, following safeguarding concerns that had been brought to Ofsted's attention.

The college currently has approximately 200 vulnerable learners under the age of 19. These include care leavers, children in the care of the local authority, learners on child protection plans and those designated as children in need. Of those learners in the care of the local authority, almost half are unaccompanied asylum seekers who do not have English as their first language.

What progress have leaders made to assure effective arrangements to safeguard vulnerable learners?

Insufficient progress

Arrangements to keep the most vulnerable learners safe while at college are weak. This visit has raised very serious concerns about the capacity of leaders and managers to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable learners.

Leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead, do not have a good enough oversight or understanding of the actions staff take, or need to take, to secure the well-being of vulnerable learners. They do not know how staff help vulnerable learners to remain in learning, feel safe at college and thrive. Leaders and managers do not hold staff at all levels to account for the individual learners they have in their care. Staff records of meetings with learners are scant, poorly recorded and, on occasion, simply anecdotal.

Senior managers do not review the work of staff or the interventions they take on behalf of vulnerable learners. They do not know what impact staff actions have on improving learners' health and well-being. Leaders, managers and staff fail to identify and take appropriate action to protect vulnerable learners at acute risk of self-harm.

Leaders and managers do not pay enough attention to the reasons for learners' absence. They are too accepting of the reasons that learners and staff give. Although managers and staff follow up low attendance, their actions have limited impact.

Leaders' and managers' reports to governors on safeguarding arrangements are ineffectual because they are insufficiently detailed. Reporting is perfunctory and focused on meeting procedural requirements.

Following a serious incident, governors and senior leaders have been slow to respond and review their existing procedures. Leaders and managers were unable to identify to inspectors the changes they had made as a result of their own review of safeguarding procedures following this incident. They have not acted with sufficient urgency to strengthen the reporting of concerns or managers' oversight of safeguarding

arrangements for vulnerable learners. For example, they do not identify precisely or monitor carefully the well-being of learners known to be at high risk of self-harm. Managers and staff fail to share information on learners' current well-being appropriately or ensure that learners access suitable support. Managers do not hold staff accountable for the learners in their care. Leaders and managers report that they plan to (a) initiate training to help staff identify learners at risk of self-harm and (b) introduce a new system of monitoring learners' well-being, but they were unable to provide any supporting information at the time of the inspection.

Even when staff recognise and record key indicators of learners at risk of self-harm, they do not always take suitable steps to safeguard learners. Leaders and managers are unaware of this failure and have therefore not rectified it. They have yet to ensure that staff record meetings with vulnerable learners in adequate detail, including what action staff plan to take to help learners stay safe.

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