

Waltham Forest College

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Rieks Drijver, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: General further education college

Address: 707 Forest Rd
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Waltham Forest College is a general further education college in east London. The college's most recent inspection was in February 2018 when overall effectiveness was judged to be good. Safeguarding was judged to be effective.

This monitoring visit was made as a response to concerns that Ofsted had received regarding safeguarding at the college. These related to the overall culture of safeguarding at the college, and how leaders and managers responded to notified concerns.

Themes

How effective have governors, leaders and managers been in establishing a safeguarding culture at the college so that learners feel safe?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have established a suitable culture for safeguarding. They have appropriate policies, procedures and risk assessments, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty. They keep an accurate single central record. Leaders have created effective safeguarding roles within the college, referred to as the 'BeSafe' team. Learners have a good awareness of this team and its purpose.

Governors have a secure overview of safeguarding. They receive sufficiently frequent reports on referrals and incidents and are well-informed about notifications to external agencies. In their reports to governors, leaders and managers do not set out how they will continuously improve the effectiveness of safeguarding. As a result, governors cannot support, or hold leaders to account for, their ongoing development of safeguarding.

Through the well-planned tutorial programme, learners receive appropriate training in safeguarding. They receive pertinent information about being safe at the college and within their own neighbourhoods. All learners the inspector spoke to said they feel safe. However, too many learners cannot recall the content of their safeguarding training. Staff do not check, over time, that learners have retained relevant information. Student services staff, who design the safeguarding training, and managers of vocational subjects do not work together closely enough. As a result, student services staff do not know if teachers have implemented the safeguarding curriculum effectively.

Senior staff liaise very well with local agencies. They represent the college on important local safeguarding forums. They work closely with, for example, the safer schools officer, so they are quickly aware of any issues affecting their learners.

Managers have not always been sufficiently vigilant in ensuring all staff complete safeguarding training. In 2018/19, too many staff were not up to date with this. On becoming aware of the issue, managers have ensured all staff have now received training.

How effective are governors, leaders and managers at acting upon safeguarding concerns when they arise?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers use their procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns effectively. They deal promptly with any safeguarding issues when they arise. They investigate appropriately any concerns raised. These include examples when allegations related to safeguarding have been made about staff.

Leaders and managers work effectively with local agencies when necessary. Three recent cases came to the attention of the local authority designated officer. Local authority managers concluded that college managers had investigated the cases appropriately, with reference to their policies and procedures. Inspectors considered the outcomes from the investigations to be reasonable.

Safeguarding managers have comprehensive records of all learners referred for safeguarding purposes. In these, they record and can demonstrate their close work with partners from external agencies. For example, they work well with the youth offending team so that they know of any learners who have previous criminal convictions. They maintain this work, also in liaison with the police, to gain information about learners who become involved in crime or receive cautions. Safeguarding managers make sure that they inform teaching staff fully of any such issues.

Curriculum and student services staff do not maintain sufficiently effective communication to monitor at-risk learners, once they know about them. Teachers do not always feedback adequately on the actions they take with learners who are at risk. Teachers do not always take effective enough action to monitor at-risk learners. For example, they do not check adequately why at-risk learners have been absent.

Senior leaders have created a secure culture and practice regarding safeguarding. However, examples exist where senior leaders have been suitably notified of, and managed, safeguarding referrals, but a few staff have remained dissatisfied, despite outcomes being reached and appropriate actions put in place. These staff have then circumvented the established procedures for raising concerns, including using those set out in the whistleblowing policy, to air their grievances relating to these closed issues.

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