

The SMB Group

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 130754

Name of lead inspector: Russ Henry, His Majesty's Inspector

Inspection date: 10 May 2024

Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Stephenson Campus
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit focused on safeguarding arrangements and was undertaken with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

Themes

How well do managers and staff work with vulnerable learners who have challenging behaviour to keep them and others safe?

Significant progress

Managers and staff work diligently and considerately with students who demonstrate challenging behaviour. They link disciplinary meetings with welfare support and tutorial activities, to ensure that learners understand behavioural expectations and make use of support that can help them to improve. They also link disciplinary outcomes to safeguarding support activities. For example, when a student is the victim of bullying, staff work hard to ensure that they are safe, feel safe and can continue to study. They also work with the perpetrator to improve their conduct and avoid further difficulties. If learners refuse to improve their behaviour and represent a danger to other learners, then senior leaders take appropriate decisions to exclude them from college.

Staff implement risk assessments, safety plans and adapted timetables to support vulnerable learners to adhere to safe behaviours in the college, for example by providing them with safe spaces and safe people for times when they feel worried or otherwise vulnerable.

Do staff at all levels understand their roles in relation to safeguarding and do they carry these out effectively?

Reasonable progress

Staff with specific responsibility for safeguarding usually take suitable action to deal with concerns. They promptly contact learners to gather necessary information, and communicate appropriately with parents, other staff members and external agencies such as the police.

Teachers and curriculum managers demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding processes. They understand their responsibilities towards learners who make safeguarding disclosures, their legal responsibilities, and the importance of follow-up welfare support.

Senior managers take appropriate action if concerns are raised about staff conduct, or the reporting of safeguarding issues. However, in a very small number of minor safeguarding cases, staff have been too trusting of their colleagues and, as a result, have been too slow to escalate concerns to senior managers.

Do staff keep parents and carers appropriately informed when there are concerns about the safety and well-being of their child? Reasonable progress

When safeguarding concerns are raised about a child or vulnerable adult, safeguarding staff make prompt contact with parents where this is appropriate. This enables them to share the safeguarding or welfare concern, gather a fuller picture of the circumstances relating to the concern, and to advise about or arrange follow-up support. They ensure that parents are involved appropriately if a safeguarding issue is also a matter for the police. Staff behave sensitively and carefully when there are concerns about a learner's family circumstances and involve other agencies when this is appropriate.

In a small number of minor cases, staff have not communicated as effectively or appropriately with parents. When this has occurred, leaders have investigated the circumstances thoroughly and taken appropriate action.

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