

Lewisham Southwark College

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Rieks Drijver HMI

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Type of provider: General further education college

Address: Lewisham Way
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

The college was inspected by Ofsted in May 2016 and the overall effectiveness judged as requires improvement; safeguarding was judged to be effective. Since the inspection Ofsted has received a safeguarding-related complaint about the college, and has been notified by the local authority of the death of a young man in Peckham who was a student at the college. The two concerns are not connected. Both concerns relate to students at the Lewisham campus.

This monitoring visit has been commissioned to consider managers' effectiveness in responding to safeguarding concerns, the effectiveness of managers' liaison with external agencies, and how well students are trained to keep themselves safe.

Themes

How effective are managers at responding to safeguarding concerns, and how well do they use the outcomes of concerns investigated to plan further staff and student training?

Managers respond effectively to safeguarding concerns when these are raised. Inspectors reviewed a sample of recent safeguarding incidents and in all cases these were documented well and demonstrated that senior leaders, managers and staff adhere closely to college procedures. The principal maintains a good oversight of the most concerning incidents, and local authority staff confirm that college staff work well with them in reporting and resolving concerns.

Senior staff are aware of the risks and threats posed to their students, and have introduced highly effective measures to keep students safe from these. For example, college and security staff carry out weapons searches at random times throughout the year. Managers have considered carefully how best to train students to be safe. This includes detailed training through the tutorial programme and the use of a restorative justice approach to conflict resolution. Security arrangements at campuses are good; students and staff adhere well to the requirement to wear identity badges, and the use of security barriers ensures that unauthorised people are prevented from gaining access to the sites.

Managers and staff use their good understanding of current safeguarding trends well to develop staff and student training. For example, in response to the rise in cyber bullying and the inappropriate use of social media, managers introduced training for students, particularly those who are more vulnerable. This has resulted in reduced incidents of cyber bullying. Managers have taken good actions to ensure that students are able and confident to report concerns. These include a very quick and easy way to report incidents of bullying via a link on the online student portal.

Student services staff have developed a 'positive citizenship' lesson that all 16- to 18-year-olds have participated in. This allows students to consider the safety of

themselves and others in relation to, for example, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and bullying. Staff's success at safeguarding students is reflected in the fact that they are helping school leaders in Lewisham to develop their own weapons policies.

How well do managers work with local agencies, including the police and local authority representatives, to understand current and emerging threats to students' safety? How effective are their actions to mitigate these threats and keep students safe?

Managers have a range of effective links with local agency representatives, and they use these very well to safeguard students.

Staff from the youth offending team and college meet regularly and share information effectively to safeguard young people. They always meet prior to a young person known to the youth offending team joining the college. This ensures that college staff are aware of any safeguarding concerns and are alert to young people's particular vulnerabilities, such as child sexual exploitation.

The safer college police officer spends up to one and a half days per week at the Lewisham campus, but visits to Southwark campus are less frequent. Staff liaise well with other police representatives when necessary in order to resolve specific issues when they are notified of risks.

College staff receive a weekly update from the safer college police officer about young people known to routinely carry knives, and staff and external agencies cooperate well on specific incidents, such as in identifying young people involved in crime outside of the college. College staff attend quarterly meetings in Southwark that help them stay up to date with local crime trends such as theft of mobile phones by moped gangs. Students report that staff are effective at raising their awareness of these issues so that they can keep themselves safe in the community.

Although managers' links with outside agencies are effective, their participation in safeguarding groups outside of the college is not fully developed. For example, their attendance at Local Safeguarding Children Boards is sporadic.

Senior leaders and managers respond quickly and decisively to safeguarding concerns when they arise. They have worked well with the local counter-terrorism unit following recent events in London, one of which took place close to the Southwark campus. They have been quick to strengthen security arrangements to protect students and the campus, and to evacuate the campus safely and account for students in the case of an emergency.

How effective is the training and guidance given to students regarding keeping themselves safe, and to what extent do students feel safe at the college?

Students receive very effective training to keep themselves safe. At the start of the year all students receive training on how to stay safe, which includes information about specific concerns within the local area, such as gangs and knife crime.

Inspectors spoke with students from different programmes, and of different ages, and all were able to recall the training that they had. Students say that college staff have struck a good balance by alerting them to issues that may affect them without overemphasising them; they say that the balance is right. Students say that there are few safety concerns for them in the college. They are aware of some of the challenges that exist in the local area, but say that staff manage student behaviour very well and that any issues that exist outside the college are not brought into it. One student summed this up by saying that they put their differences aside at college as 'We're all here to learn.' Inspectors found that this view was widely held by students, and all those spoken with said that they feel safe at the college and feel well supported by college staff. This is corroborated through the findings of managers' annual survey of students, in which a very high proportion of students say that they feel safe, and is summed up by a student who described the atmosphere at the college as 'calm and civil'.

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