

Leeds College of Art

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130547

Name of lead inspector: Vivien Shipley HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 March 2011

Type of provider: Specialist college

Address: Blenheim Walk
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS2 9AQ

Telephone number: 01132 028000

Information about the provider

1. Leeds College of Art has played a central role in providing specialist education and training in art, design and craft for more than 160 years and is one of four remaining specialist art colleges in the further education (FE) sector. The college has two main sites close to the city centre of Leeds. Blenheim Walk houses the higher education (HE) provision and the original college of art building in Vernon Street is the location of the FE programmes. The college offers provision from level 1 through to HE in a range of vocational diagnostic and specialist art and design courses offered through part-time and full-time routes. The college's mission is 'to provide a distinctive education in art, design and the crafts, enabling its students to fulfil their creative ambitions and to progress to and through successful careers'.
2. The majority of FE students are aged 16 to 19 and follow full-time advanced level courses. The majority of adults follow day or evening access programmes. Adults are also offered leisure courses for which they pay fees. Working with Leeds City Council, the college offers courses to promote adults' mental health and well-being. Over half of the college's FE students come from the Leeds area. The remainder travel in from the surrounding areas including North Yorkshire, Wakefield, Bradford, Kirklees and Calderdale. Of around 2,000 students, 40% are enrolled on FE courses with the remainder following degree-level programmes. Around two-thirds of FE students are female.
3. The college provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - Leeds City Council (informal adult learning)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners:	
Further education (16 to 18)	600 full-time learners
Foundation learning, including	12 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners:	
Further education (19+)	116 full-time learners 54 part-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 3
Aspect	Grade	
Outcomes for learners	2	
Quality of provision	2	
Leadership and management	3	
Safeguarding	3	
Equality and diversity	3	
Subject Areas	Grade	
Diagnostic art and design	2	
Specialist art and design	2	

Overall effectiveness

- Leeds College of Art offers good provision and has satisfactory capacity to improve. Students speak very positively about college life. They appreciate highly that their teachers and tutors are well-qualified and are up-to-date practising artists and designers. Students make good progress at college and most achieve high grades. On the foundation studies diploma in art and design students' achievement is outstanding. On national diplomas in art and design, and graphics, students' achievement is good. The proportion of students successfully completing the national diploma in fashion and clothing has declined and is low. The college is implementing strategies to resolve this and signs are positive with fewer students leaving early. On the introductory and first diplomas in art and design the proportions of students completing successfully in 2010 were low. The college has made staff changes and revised the content of these courses. Current students feel that their courses are going well. Adult students on access courses enjoy college. For many the experience is a significant career change which gives them confidence and direction.
- Teachers successfully inspire and motivate students to produce high-quality work. Students are very successful in securing places at prestigious HE establishments, often on highly competitive courses. As the college identifies in

its self-assessment report, more needs to be done to help the small number of students who wish to secure employment.

6. The curriculum is enriched by exhibitions, visiting artists and trips that students find inspiring. Students value the additional support they receive from tutors. The number of students identified to be in need of support and who take it up has declined and their achievement of qualifications is lower than their peers.
7. Leadership and governance are satisfactory. Arrangements for quality assurance, although satisfactory, have not been sufficiently effective in raising standards on lower-performing courses. The promotion of equality and diversity and arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates vary between courses. On the foundation studies diploma in art and design success rates are outstanding. Success rates are high on national diplomas in art and design, and graphics. However, on the national diploma in fashion and clothing and on introductory and first diplomas success rates declined in 2010 and are low.
- Students make good progress. They enjoy college and speak very positively about how the services they receive help them to progress to prestigious HE establishments. They produce high standards of work and achieve high grades on most courses.
- Students feel safe at college. Teachers and workshop technicians ensure that students receive a good health and safety induction that helps them to work safely. The promotion of healthy lifestyles and students' involvement in the community are inconsistent. Their preparation for economic and social well-being is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and most are practising artists. Teachers' enthusiasm and their imaginative use of resources and teaching strategies successfully inspire students. Arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice in teaching and learning are not sufficiently formalised.
- The college offers a good range of provision that is highly effective in meeting the needs of students wishing to progress to HE. Working with partners, the college provides courses in the community that engage new students. A wide and exciting range of enrichment activities, including exhibitions and visiting speakers, broaden and enhance the curriculum.
- Students value the high levels of support they receive. Specialist support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is given a very high priority. Success rates for those in receipt of additional learning support are lower than the college average. Students receive effective advice and guidance on progression to HE but more needs to be done to help those whose aim is to secure employment.

- Leadership and governance are satisfactory. Processes for the development of the strategic plan are clear but some performance targets are not quantified or monitored with sufficient regularity. Curriculum and business planning processes are not sufficiently focused on monitoring the experience provided for students. Course management is good.
- Arrangements for quality assurance and self-assessment, although satisfactory, are not sufficiently effective in promoting improvement. Quality improvement actions are not always measurable. Arrangements for validating judgements made through self-assessment are not sufficiently robust. Some strengths in the provision are over-stated and areas for improvement, such as low pass rates on introductory and first diplomas, are missed.
- Financial management is good. Resources are prioritised wisely to improve learning facilities. Students benefit from learning in vibrant accommodation located in the city centre. Very good workshop accommodation allows them to explore new ways of working. The college provides good value for money.

What does Leeds College of Art need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on lower performing courses by rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of current improvement strategies. Develop and implement timely actions, as needed, to ensure that current rates of retention are maintained.
- Review and further develop the curriculum so that it is more appropriate for students who decide they do not wish to progress to HE.
- Review and enhance current arrangements for sharing good practice in teaching and learning, and in the delivery of provision to develop students' wider personal and social development.
- Improve the rigour of arrangements for performance management and self-assessment to drive improvement more rapidly.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the highly supportive teachers, technicians, tutors and learning support staff who give their time freely and use their up-to-date industrial and practising artist skills to motivate and inspire them
- the very good facilities and resources including the amazing range of workshops and Macintosh computers
- being treated professionally by friendly staff
- the opportunities provided by the college to experiment with a wide range of materials, learn new skills and become independent learners
- the support they receive to help them to progress to university
- the quality of the library and shop, and the very supportive staff in this area
- the health and safety induction that gives them the skills to work safely.

What learners would like to see improved:

- overcrowding in some studios
- the availability of computers and printers at peak times.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities but there is a lack of accountability through effective target setting. Middle managers and teachers receive good staff development. The college has a variable track record in improving success rates. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been mostly resolved. Insufficient progress has been made in improving the quality of provision which remains good. The development of some students' literacy and numeracy skills remains an issue. Financial management is sound and the college has made good investment in its estate. Financial performance is monitored robustly. Arrangements for monitoring curriculum performance are not as well developed. Quality assurance and self-assessment have not been sufficiently effective in promoting improvement. Actions to improve teaching and learning are not clearly identified in the self-assessment report.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Success rates vary between courses. On the foundation studies diploma in art and design success rates are outstanding. On advanced level national diploma courses students attain consistently high success rates on the art and design, and graphics programmes. However, on the national diploma in fashion and clothing the success rate has declined for three years and is low. On the introductory and first diploma courses, where the number of students is small, success rates declined significantly in 2010 and are low. For adult students the success rate at intermediate level has declined over two years and is low. At advanced level, where the majority of adults are enrolled, the success rate has improved consistently and is satisfactory.
10. In 2010, the overall success rate on long courses was satisfactory. Since then the college has reviewed the curriculum to focus on vocational provision and no longer offers GCE A-level and additional courses where students did not perform well. At the time of the inspection retention had improved on all courses. The rate of improvement on underperforming courses has resolved the weaknesses identified in the previous year. Pass rates are high on most courses.
11. Performance varies between different groups of students. Female students perform better than males. Those with a learning difficulty and/or disability perform in line with other students. Students receiving additional learning support do not perform as well as other students.
12. Students make good progress and on some programmes their progress is excellent. On national diplomas and the foundation studies diploma in art and design, students' achievement of high grades is outstanding. Students produce good standards of work overall and in some aspects of their programmes their work is outstanding. On the national diploma in art and design, students' exploratory drawing and sculpture are imaginative and visually exciting.

Foundation diploma students' contextual notebooks contain high levels of critical analysis. On most courses students learn to express their ideas articulately, with confidence and enthusiasm. The proportion of students who progress between levels of courses within the college has improved and is good. Foundation diploma and advanced level students are highly successful in securing places at prestigious HE institutions.

13. Students enjoy their time at college and speak very positively about the confidence they develop as a result of their studies. Their attendance is good overall, but varies between courses. Students arrive punctually and develop very positive attitudes to work. Poor behaviour in a very small minority of lessons for 16 to 18 year-olds on the introductory and first diploma disrupts the learning of some students.
14. Students say they feel safe at college and that incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly. Thorough arrangements for health and safety and good technician support ensure that students work in safe technical and workshop areas. Entry to buildings for visitors and students is controlled and evening security arrangements allow students to access facilities safely at the end of the day.
15. Arrangements to promote students' economic and social development are satisfactory. Students are prepared very well for progression to university, but more needs to be done to support those who leave early or who decide to secure employment. Students on the introductory and first diploma in art and design do not make sufficient progress developing their levels of literacy and numeracy. Students receive different levels of advice and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students make a good contribution to the running of the college through student representatives and focus groups and they make a satisfactory contribution to the community.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge; most are practising artists and designers. Teachers' enthusiasm, effective planning and imaginative use of resources successfully motivate and inspire students. Teachers have high expectations and use a variety of well-planned activities and projects to challenge students. Most teachers use questioning effectively to create a stimulating and creative dialogue that extends students' knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, where students on different courses are taught together, teachers' planning is not sufficiently developed to meet the varying needs of the students. Students receive good timely assessment feedback that helps them improve.
17. Teachers make good use of initial assessment to identify students' support needs. Students have good access to timely additional learning support. Support is carefully planned for individual students and focuses on improving their literacy within vocational sessions. Support tutors are highly skilled in helping

students with a wide range of learning needs. The number of students assessed as requiring support and who take it up has declined.

18. The college offers a curriculum that is highly effective for students wishing to progress to HE. Good pathways for internal progression exist from level 1 and access courses through to degree level. The college also has strong and productive links with prestigious arts institutions and universities which provide further destinations for students. The curriculum is less well suited to those aiming to secure employment. Provision to develop students' literacy and numeracy is limited.
19. Enrichment activities are highly valued by students. The programme incorporates lectures and master classes from high-profile practitioners, often alumni, including Adam Stone, Mick Welbourn and Omar Kashoura. Students also benefit from frequent trips and residential visits to galleries and exhibitions both in Britain and abroad, for example in Berlin and Paris.
20. The college has established good collaborative partnerships that widen participation in the arts. Working with Leeds City Council, the college offers a number of community-based courses that engage learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those not in employment. With local schools and in collaboration with Aimhigher and The Sorrell Foundation, the college has developed successful Saturday clubs and summer schools for 14 to 16 year-olds. Young people are also engaged through collaboration with the local authority's hospital and home teaching service. The college plays a leading role in initiatives to engage employers through hosting forums such as 'Creative Networks'.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

21. Governors and other staff have established an appropriate strategic direction. However, as some risks and performance targets are not quantified or monitored with sufficient regularity, it is difficult for senior managers and governors to measure progress towards the achievement of the college's strategic aims. The use of performance targets, both at college and course level, to monitor and improve success rates is inconsistent. Curriculum planning involves close monitoring and management of staff delivery hours but the process is not sufficiently informed by changing local and national priorities or students' outcomes. Course management has improved recently and is now consistently good.
22. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are inducted well and have undertaken a range of training to help them carry out their roles. They fulfil their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding, and equality and diversity. Regular skills auditing has ensured that governors have a good range of skills and experience, including strong financial expertise. Financial performance is monitored closely. Governors regularly review the performance of the curriculum. However, they do not provide sufficient challenge to senior managers on the effectiveness of

- actions taken to bring about improvements in students' outcomes. The college does not have a student governor following an FE course.
23. Quality assurance arrangements, although satisfactory, are not sufficiently effective in identifying and sharing good practice, or in securing timely intervention to resolve underperformance. Quality improvement plans do not always have quantifiable targets for improvement so progress is difficult to measure. Some strengths in the self-assessment report are over-stated and some weaknesses in the provision are not identified. Arrangements are in place to validate the judgements made through self-assessment but these have not provided sufficient challenge to senior managers. Arrangements for observing and improving the quality of teaching and learning are not sufficiently focused on raising the performance of teachers judged to be satisfactory.
 24. Arrangements to safeguard students are satisfactory. An appropriate policy is in place which outlines the college's values, staff responsibilities and procedures for complying with legislation. All staff are vetted and trained appropriately. A designated governor and members of staff have received the training needed to carry out their roles effectively. Recently implemented arrangements for risk assessing new staff are effective. Management of health and safety is good. All staff and students undertake a health and safety induction when they join the college. Training in risk assessment helps students to work safely and this prepares them well for progression to further study.
 25. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Governors have approved a single equality scheme and policy. However, as the college has not yet developed an action plan the impact of the policy is not measurable. All staff and governors undertake initial training which has been updated to reflect recent changes in legislation. A process of impact assessment is in place for new policies and changes to the estate. The college undertakes data analysis of its staff profile and students' outcomes but has not taken action to resolve differences, for example between the performance of male and female students, or the recruitment of staff from under-represented groups. Students treat each other with respect.
 26. The college has an effective learner involvement strategy. Elected student representatives from each course meet regularly and manage their own meetings. The framework for collecting and responding to students' views is effective. Students are happy with the action taken as a result of their feedback and feel involved in decision-making processes.
 27. Financial management is good. Financial performance is monitored closely and the college has prioritised investment in learning resources very effectively. The college operates from vibrant accommodation located in the city centre that is maintained well. Staff are well-qualified; many are practising artists. They receive good support through a wide range of professional development. Some managers have completed specific management training which has improved their management skills and their ability to lead their teams. The college offers good value for money.

Subject areas

Diagnostic art and design

Grade 2

Context

28. The college offers intermediate and advanced level access to HE courses for adults. For 16 to 18 year-olds the foundation studies diploma in art and design, and introductory and first diplomas in art and design are available. Additional qualifications in drawing and three-dimensional designs are also offered. Three-hundred and twenty-six students are enrolled on advanced level courses; the majority are on the foundation diploma in art and design with 33 students enrolled on the introductory and intermediate diplomas. Most students are full-time, with the exception of approximately 31 students on evening access to HE courses.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good overall. Success rates on the foundation studies diploma in art and design are outstanding. In 2010, following previously high performance, success rates fell on the introductory and first diplomas and were low. For adults on the advanced access course success rates are high. At intermediate level on the general art and design access course success rates have declined to below the national average.
- Students speak very positively about their college experience. They attend regularly and make good progress. Students are very successful in progressing to prestigious HE institutions, with many securing places on highly competitive courses. At the end of their courses most students achieve high grades. This year retention has improved on almost all courses, particularly on those where performance was previously low.
- Students produce high-quality work. Foundation studies diploma students are confident and articulate. They develop high-quality creative work through group critiques and become independent thinkers. The best students are able to use a wide variety of media and their work is individual and lively. For example, on the object and spatial option students produce well-executed and amusing drawings and structures. Some life drawing and direct observation are underdeveloped.
- Students' portfolios are presented professionally. In a project prepared to support an application for an HE course at St Martins College a student produced very sensitive textile and fashion designs that demonstrated a flair for pattern and quirky form. Students' research notebooks are very good. Adult students on access programmes produce good sketch and research books and use colour and surface texture with confidence.
- Students on the introductory and first diploma courses are ambitious for themselves and their progression to the next level of study is good. They produce good work in photography although the work seen during the

inspection was satisfactory overall. Students' behaviour on these courses is generally respectful, but in a minority of lessons they were over-boisterous and too noisy.

- Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers are very focused on raising students' aspirations and preparing them to become effective and independent practitioners. Students are keen and well-motivated and they highly value teachers' up-to-date expertise. Workshop technicians help students to understand processes, follow safe working practices and resolve technical problems.
- Most teachers make good use of sophisticated and effective questioning techniques. This often results in a stimulating and creative dialogue between students and teachers. Occasionally questioning could be extended further to ensure that students of all abilities are making progress. Teachers understand students' individual learning needs but it is not always clear how lessons will be tailored to meet them.
- Students receive frequent and helpful assessment feedback on their work. Teachers place successful emphasis in tutorials and critiques on helping students to set their own creative priorities which help them to make good progress. Introductory and first diploma students are set useful time constraints and receive good written feedback. Pastoral support and guidance are good.
- The range of diagnostic provision is good. However, for introductory diploma students the additional three-dimensional award is inappropriate. In the past students have not achieved particularly well on this course. Workloads for current students have been reduced and the value of the additional course is to be reviewed at the end of the academic year.
- Exhibitions by college artists and designers, and visiting practitioners are held regularly and these provide an excellent stimulus for many students. Students on the fine art foundation course benefit from two-day creative workshops held by prestigious visiting universities. These give them confidence in executing their self-directed studies. Enrichment is particularly good for access students, who also work well in the community. Former students return to show how their work and careers have developed which motivates current students.
- Course management has improved since last year, when the timing of interventions to improve low performance was too slow. It is now consistently good. This year the college has implemented effective strategies to raise standards on underperforming courses.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory. Overall course grading is accurate. However, at course level reviews vary in quality. Insufficient emphasis is placed on identifying areas for improvement in teaching and learning. The analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of managers' actions to improve students' outcomes is not sufficiently robust to inform future action plans.

What does Leeds College of Art need to do to improve further?

- Robustly monitor the impact of current strategies to improve students' outcomes on the introductory and first diplomas in art and design so that standards improve to those of previous years.
- Share good practice in teaching and learning through more rigorous course review. Ensure that the range of teaching strategies and learning materials meet the needs of all students, particularly in lessons where different courses are taught together.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment by identifying areas for improvement in teaching and learning, and by better evaluating the effectiveness of managers' actions to improve students' outcomes. Ask students for their views more formally to influence course action plans.

Specialist art and design

Grade 2

Context

29. The college offers a range of full- and part-time advanced level programmes in art and design, graphics, fashion and clothing, and interior decoration. Currently 338 full- and seven part-time students are enrolled. The majority are aged 16 to 18 and are female. Of 345 the students, 35 are adults.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates are high on the national extended diplomas in art and design, and graphics. On the national certificate in interior design the rate has improved and is satisfactory. However, the success rate has declined on the national diploma in fashion and clothing and is low. The proportion of students achieving high grades is very good on almost all courses.
- Students enjoy college and make good progress. In group critiques they acquire the skills needed to speak with conviction about their work. They are animated and their enthusiasm and appetite for learning is infectious. They arrive punctually to lessons and attend regularly. A high proportion of full-time students progress to HE, often securing places on highly competitive courses.
- Students produce high-quality written and practical work. Their sketchbooks are sophisticated and demonstrate that they are able to use a plethora of media and techniques with confidence and flair. They fully understand the links between theory and practice. For example, fine art students produce very high-quality monochrome images of simple household items.
- Teachers have up-to-date industrial skills and knowledge which they use successfully to energise and inspire students. In a particularly effective lesson, students presented very thoroughly researched historical and contextual projects on Japanese Haute Couture and Viennese Actionism using brilliant dialogue and narrative. Relationships between teachers and students are very professional and they prepare students for progression to HE well.
- Teachers check students' understanding regularly using a wide range of questioning techniques. They also provide students with detailed feedback on their written and practical work which helps them to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- Students receive good personal and academic support. Students value the time that tutors spend supporting them outside of studio sessions. Teachers regularly give students constructive comments and encouragement that are very effective in helping them to develop their ideas further.
- Teachers enrich the learning experience through well-planned visits to museums and galleries and live assignments. For example, fashion students worked successfully with Leeds City Council and a company producing bullet-proof clothing to develop a range of safety garments designed to reduce accident and mortality rates.

- Students have an excellent rapport with their tutors. They appreciate the specialist advice and guidance tutors give them and they respond with enthusiasm. Students perceive the college to be a safe environment in which to study and learn. Their views about the quality of the provision are taken seriously.
- Most students benefit from learning in high-quality studios and workshops with very good learning resources. Overcrowding in fashion studios impacts adversely on some students' ability to develop appropriate technical skills. The library provides an impressive range of books, compact discs and videos to support students with their research.
- Curriculum management is good. The self-assessment of the quality of the provision is mostly accurate but some grades awarded are over-generous. Recent actions to improve declining success rates are appropriate but have not been timely in previous years.

What does Leeds College of Art need to do to improve further?

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of current strategies to improve success rates on fashion and clothing courses. Implement new actions in a timely manner to ensure that all students reach their full potential.
- Share good practice in teaching and learning, particularly in relation to improving the management of large groups in fashion studios.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment so that course teams have an accurate understanding of the quality of the provision.

Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Dean of FE, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed. They observed lessons, assessments and tutorial reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from all of the programmes the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Leeds College of Art

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	716	600	116
Part-time learners	54	0	54
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*</i>	3		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3		
Quality of provision	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	3	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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