

# Ruskin College

## Specialist designated institution

<b>Inspection dates</b>		20-23 November 2012
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- Many students make very good progress, achieving better than might be expected from their starting points.
- Students' progression rates to further and higher education and to employment are high.
- Students quickly develop a positive work ethic and good independent learning skills.
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers skilfully build the self-confidence and self-esteem of students and help them develop good personal and social skills.
- Teachers ensure learning and assessment are made interesting and relevant to students.
- The college's tutorial system is highly effective in addressing the academic and personal needs of students by developing academic rigour and providing strong personal support.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is carefully and effectively planned and integrated into the curriculum and teaching.
- Strong leadership, the significant commitment of all managers and staff, and students who are fully involved in decision-making procedures, ensure Ruskin achieves its mission of providing education to disadvantaged adults.
- Programme review and development are very effective in raising standards and maintaining the relevance of courses.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- On a significant minority of courses, too few students complete their courses successfully.
- Students' individual learning needs are not met fully in all group teaching sessions.
- Staff do not share or use information on students' progress and additional learning needs well.
- Improvement relies too much on the commitment, skill and effort of specific individuals, rather than being the planned product of clear and comprehensive management systems, including performance management.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates for the foundation English, certificate to higher education (HE) and the range of lifelong learning courses by ensuring that staff monitor students' progress in a more coordinated, effective way, and that academic and support staff liaise more closely and share information about students where appropriate.
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by better planning to meet individual learning needs, particularly for group sessions, through more focused questioning and a wider range of learning activities.
- Simplify the college's strategic planning and monitoring procedures by ensuring appropriate staff are fully aware of their personal role in achieving and routinely reporting on specified actions.
- Make the observation of teaching and learning a more effective part of the performance management of teachers by ensuring that lesson observations take place as intended, that areas for improvement are described in detail and action points reviewed promptly, and that rigorous, transparent and consistent performance management procedures underpin the entire scheme.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Most students make very good progress, reaching a higher level than might be expected based on their starting points. Many students join the college with low prior attainment, with only around one third having five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C; yet they rapidly develop new social and personal skills as well as acquiring the knowledge required to complete their course successfully.
- The progression rates of students to further and higher education or to employment are high. For example, three quarters of the students on the one-year Certificate in Higher Education in English studies programme progressed to a degree course, most opting to remain at Ruskin.
- Student outcomes for the college's innovative 'Ransackers' course are good. This programme is designed for older students with few or no formal qualifications who have not studied full-time previously. The large majority of students decide to continue to study on other courses, particularly the Certificate in Higher Education course run by the college.
- Students acquire good independent learning skills and produce work of a high standard. For example, the individual research projects of 'Ransacker' students are well researched, well constructed and students demonstrate high standards of English.
- The overall success rates for students attending short courses are high and comparable to national averages. Short courses in trades union studies, which attract around one thousand students annually from all areas of the country, have excellent results, with virtually all students completing their course successfully.
- Success rates are low for the foundation English, the Certificate in Higher Education and the range of lifelong learning for work and study courses. A significant proportion of this provision is taught in partnership with community groups, working with individuals who are very difficult to engage in a sustained programme of education, such as homeless people. Poor attendance and retention rates, resulting from the lifestyles of some of these students, led to low results. Overall, attendance rates are no better than satisfactory.
- Staff analyse the recruitment and results of different groups of students to try and detect identifiable under performance by any particular group, although the number of students involved is generally too low to draw any reliable conclusions. However, staff have been slow to

review the relatively lower success rates for the large number of students who declare a learning difficulty and/or disability.

- Staff work hard to ensure students quickly develop a positive work ethic. Students learn how to speak in public with confidence and structure their work with academic rigour. Many play an active role in their local communities, for example working as volunteers or contributing to the work of trades unions and local campaign groups.
- Students greatly enjoy their lessons and their time in the college. A strong feature of the college is the way students help and support each other and work well as a team.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The high quality of teaching, learning and assessment is reflected in the good student outcomes. Staff are very well qualified and experienced and use their skills effectively to plan and promote learning. In the large majority of sessions, teachers skilfully develop the understanding of students and build their confidence and self-esteem by contextualising learning and assessment to the life experience of the largely mature students. Students are highly motivated by teachers' use of contemporary topics. For example, students engage in lively and energetic debate on trades unionism.
- In a minority of lessons, insufficient planning and attention are given to the different learning needs and abilities of students. A limited range of learning activities and insufficiently focused questioning inhibit all students in these classes from learning at their best.
- The quality of written teaching and learning materials is not always adequate. The better materials are well presented and accessible to readers, but a few comprise photocopies with dense text and multiple facts.
- Students benefit from good, wide-ranging pre-course information, advice and guidance. Enthusiastic student ambassadors distribute information in the local community and give advice about studying and living at the college. Open days, taster events and short courses are used well to guide and support students. One overseas student greatly valued the supportive, informative and comprehensive telephone and email information, advice and guidance received prior to joining the college. Students benefit from timely on-course information about internal and external progression opportunities.
- Initial assessment is highly effective in evaluating the English and mathematical skills of students who come from a broad range of backgrounds and often have low levels of prior attainment. The quality of additional learning support is good. However, the results of initial assessments and additional learning support diagnoses are not communicated to teaching staff in a timely manner, to ensure the individual needs of all students are met. For example, assessment outcomes are seldom used to provide specific support for students in lessons.
- The development of English and mathematical skills is well integrated into lessons and the assessment of students' work. However, not all students who would benefit from additional support lessons in English and mathematics take advantage of the discrete courses available.
- Assessment practices are good. Effective use is made of the tutorial system to assess students' progress against group and individual goals. Written feedback is sharply focused on extending and developing learning, including correcting grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- The unique nature of the college's tutorial system, whereby students have weekly meetings with their tutors individually or in very small groups, is highly effective in checking progress and addressing the individual academic and personal support needs of students. Tutorials combine critical analysis of students' work with a nurturing approach to their personal development.
- Many students enthuse about the support and encouragement from staff that have helped them to acquire essential skills and attributes for life and employment. A high proportion of students has suffered from disadvantage, including mental health issues and alcohol and drug dependency. Many attribute their enhanced ability to live a more orderly life and their improved job prospects to the nurturing ethos prevalent in the college.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good, with careful planning to embed, discuss and celebrate equality and diversity. For example, in one session students discussed stereotypes and assumptions relating to gay rights and 'biased' juries. Teachers effectively use and re-visit ground rules to manage student behaviour.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Powerful leadership and the drive and dedication of staff at all levels ensure that Ruskin College successfully meets its ambitious mission of providing educational opportunities for adults who might otherwise be excluded or disadvantaged. The college's demand for high standards, whilst allowing for the difficulties that some students have, is notable.
- The governing executive provides good challenge and support. Members, who have a broad range of experience and expertise, understand the college well. They provide detailed and useful contributions, for example when developing strategic objectives or the validation of courses.
- The governing executive, the Principal and senior managers have ensured that strategic priorities such as improving learning facilities, financial planning and programme development are very well managed. The major task of bringing together two sites into a single impressive campus has been particularly well handled.
- The college's procedures for developing and monitoring strategic and action plans are overly complex. The cascading of objectives becomes confusing, actions are assigned to groups rather than individuals and the achievement of actions is only monitored in a general way. Targets for success rates are insufficiently challenging. However, the detrimental impact of these weaker features of management is limited as important aspects of delivery and development are dealt with effectively by committees and, more importantly, by managers who take significant personal responsibility for bringing about improvement.
- Teaching and learning have been, and continue to be, improved in a number of ways. Extensive formal reviews of courses fully involve managers and are informed by helpful comments from articulate students and partners. The formal system of improving teaching and learning through observing lessons is not yet fully effective, as the number of observations is insufficient and suggested improvement activities are not monitored effectively. The college relies too much on informal discussions between staff and managers to aid personal development, with insufficient formal performance management.
- The quality of provision is improved well through very regular internal and external reviews and the rigorous work of managers. Individual courses have useful self-assessment reports, although the evidence used for reporting on teaching and learning is often limited. Appropriate action plans are reviewed rigorously as part of the self-assessment cycle. The judgements in the college's latest self-assessment report closely match the inspection findings. However, areas for improvement in the report are not linked with the relevant evidence showing why these aspects are a concern.
- Students take an active role in the community at Ruskin and contribute effectively to its steady improvement. Students' views are highly valued and often acted upon. The lively students' union and wider student body make a positive contribution to decision-making procedures and organises events to make the college a more interesting place to study. Many prominent external speakers are invited to meetings where contemporary political issues are debated with staff and students.
- Management information data are generally used satisfactorily to aid monitoring. Anomalies in the college's retention statistics for a small number of courses mean that judgements about retention in the draft self-assessment report are at odds with the reality that is actually well understood by programme coordinators.
- The college's record in widening participation is exemplary. Extremely good planning and management of the learning programmes ensure the college meets the often very specific needs

of students and the changing requirements of partners such as trades unions and charitable organisations. Staff use their extensive experience and current contacts to good effect in programme development, rightly recognising the changing environment in which the college is now operating.

- The college is playing a very effective part in raising levels of achievement for many students who have found it difficult to access education in the past. A notable number of courses are aimed explicitly at increasing students' understanding of diversity and rights. College staff and students work together to ensure that any concerns about behaviour in this residential establishment are managed appropriately.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. The Principal, as the designated person, takes a very active role in the prompt response to any perceived problems. Policies and guidance are appropriate. Following the move to a single site a few actions, such as the issuing of identity cards, the formal recording of incidents and the revision of the single record of staff details have yet to be completed. The campus offers a friendly and welcoming environment where students and staff freely mingle and support each other.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

<b>Ruskin College</b>		
<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	<b>19+ Learning programmes</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

## Provider details

<b>Ruskin College</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	Specialist designated institution
<b>Age range of learners</b>	19+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 70
	Part-time: 1,465
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Professor Audrey Mullender
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	October 2007
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.ruskin.ac.uk">www.ruskin.ac.uk</a>

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>								70
<b>Part-time</b>		507		876		66		19
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							

## Additional socio-economic information

Ruskin College is an adult residential college. It is one of ten specialist designated institutions in the further education sector. The college's mission is 'to provide educational opportunities to adults who are excluded and disadvantaged, and to transform the individuals concerned along with the communities, groups and societies from which they come'. Courses are available from entry level to postgraduate level and include humanities and social sciences provision and distinctive programmes in trade union studies. The college recruits students from all over the country, with over 86% coming from areas outside the city of Oxford.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Tony Noonan HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the college's quality officer as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and tutorials. The inspection took into account all of the Skills Funding Agency funded provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of this provision. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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