

Blake College

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		30 January–1 February 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Most learners achieve well and make good progress, given that many have a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of art and design when they start their course.
- A high proportion of learners progress to higher education, employment or further studies.
- Learners are well prepared for the next stage of their studies because of what they learn and achieve at the college.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills; they improve their confidence and ability to talk about and make art.
- Tutors challenge, motivate and stretch learners in their learning.
- Learners benefit from tutors' expertise in art and design and the way they are taught.
- Learners receive particularly good one-to-one support and benefit from small class sizes.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet learners' needs.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The number of learners who achieve their qualifications is not high enough for outcomes to be outstanding, and teaching requires improvement in a minority of classes.
- Learners do not get enough detail in tutors' written feedback to know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Managers do not evaluate the quality of teaching and learners' achievement of qualifications effectively enough.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of recorded details of observations of teaching and learning, so they are accurate and more useful when evaluating the quality of learning and assessment.
- Make sure that tutors challenge learners' lateness in line with the college's policy in all classes.
- Plan sessions more effectively where presentations require demonstration to an audience.
- Provide detailed feedback on what activities or tasks could be undertaken to improve particular aspects of learners' skills and knowledge and promote further learning.
- Improve the use of data for self-assessment, to substantiate key strengths and better target areas for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for learners are good. Most learners achieve their qualifications. Data held by the college for 2011/12 indicate that eight out of ten learners achieved advanced-level vocational qualifications on the largest programme of study, and a satisfactory number achieved high grades. On the other smaller advanced programme of study, the majority of learners achieve their qualification. ▪ Learners from different backgrounds and abilities achieve equally well and there are no significant differences in achievement between different groups. Learners with disabilities make good progress. ▪ Learners develop good skills at the college. They increase their confidence and technical skills. They articulate clearly the approach they are taking to tasks set by the tutor, and why. They develop a good understanding of art from across the world and learn much from the many gallery trips that tutors arrange. The small number of learners in each class contributes to learning, as learners feel they have more time individually with tutors to ask questions and discuss their work. They acknowledge that this has a beneficial impact on their skills development and progress in general. ▪ Learners' progress is good given the prior attainment of many; around a half started their course with few GCSEs or no prior qualifications in 2011/12. In this context, progression after one year of study to higher education or employment, or to a higher level of study at the college, is good. The majority of learners achieve their goal to progress to a degree course, many at prestigious London institutions. 	
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and this reflects learners' outcomes generally. Learners develop a good range of knowledge and skills which they are rightly proud of showing and talking about, and they enjoy their studies.
- Learners benefit from tutors' extensive experience of the creative industries. Tutors use their professional experience, for example in demonstrations for and debate with learners. Tutors use resources well to add value to learning. They teach traditional techniques, skilfully using a range of materials and media. However, although projectors are used in presentations, the limited availability of information and learning technology in a small minority of classrooms inhibits learners' ability to present in some teaching sessions. The learners currently use different size

sketchbooks and computer screens, so few people are able to see the images they are describing.

- Where teaching is good or better, tutors create a purposeful atmosphere and learners work diligently. Learners communicate confidently and are able to critique their own and others' work effectively. Learners carry out tasks independently and use the rich local research facilities to good effect. One learner, responding to an assignment on identity, independently researched classical cultures in a local national museum and expressed some well-thought-through ideas on cultural identity from the research he had conducted. In digital media, learners make excellent progress with a complex task of creating a timeline in 'Cinema 4D'.
- In art theory classes, learners explore stimulating topics such as the visual representation and expression of emotion through different types of visual media. Learners' good preparation for a session observed showed their deep understanding and interest in the subject. Peer responses prompted a lively discussion in which learners felt comfortable to share their personal and varying views on religion and fear. A wide source of reference material proved an effective catalyst and learners exchanged ideas confidently on, for example, the emotional power of a painting showing a moment in time compared with the recorded and more complete narrative provided by a film.
- Learners benefit from regular, thorough feedback from tutors which is encouraging and supportive. Feedback strategies used by both tutors and learners provide thoughtful comments on the work completed. In practical sessions tutors assess the extent of learning through focused, individually targeted questions and discussions. Assessment is effective and methodical. However, although assessment feedback is generally a fair reflection of the learners' accomplishment in a particular project, recorded information lacks specific detail on how learners can develop their skills and knowledge further, or clear deadlines for when this should be achieved.
- Learners are supported and stretched well in their contextual studies. They acquire the appropriate visual art language, learning through teaching sessions the vocabulary they will need in higher education.
- All learners coming to the college, but particularly those seeking a change of direction in their lives, value the strong supportive environment and the personal care they receive. They interact well with their peers, who come from a wide range of abilities and backgrounds. Tutors provide excellent advice and guidance on what the next steps are for learners, and support them skilfully with their applications to higher education. Tutors promote topics about equality and diversity through international art and different cultural approaches to art as an integral part of the learning process.
- In a minority of classes punctuality requires improvement. The expectation for punctuality is clearly communicated to learners but remains a challenge for the college, although attendance has improved since the previous inspection. Tutors do not enforce the college policies consistently.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Leaders demonstrate an ambition to improve the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment. Directors communicate with, and manage, an entirely part-time teaching staff well. Staff at all levels work hard to support learners to achieve and to provide them with the best foundation for future progression to higher education and employment. The consistently good teaching and appropriate systems for assessment have been sufficient in maintaining performance. Although much progress has been made with a new management team, however, more needs to be done so that managers can be sure of the impact of teaching on learning and the achievement of learners.

- The scheme for observing teaching and learning is well established. The college initiated productive partnerships in developing the scheme with a local higher education institution. Tutors observe each other's classes, which helps them to share good practice. Managers have also identified areas of poor performance and acted decisively.
- The managers' overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning matches that seen by inspectors. However, the commentary in a few observation records does not match the grade awarded. Not enough is captured about learning in observations; many only cover what the tutor did.
- Managers have improved the self-assessment process and report. They have tackled adequately the actions for improvement noted at the previous inspection. The report is concise, structured well and simple, and contains salient information on where improvements need to be made. In places, however, the report lacks rich judgement, and data are not provided to substantiate strengths and identify where there are specific areas for improvement.
- Managers make good use of a variety of independent online learner and learners' views in college surveys. The independent learner views contain particularly useful and positive views about the learning experience at the college. The views of parents about the college are equally positive.
- The curriculum is well planned, and designed for learners wishing to progress to higher education or employment. Learners appreciate the time and effort that tutors give, and their expertise in preparing them for the next steps in their studies. Learners' applications and subsequent interviews with higher education institutions are planned and managed carefully and based on an expert overview of what is required on an art and design degree. The college brings together private and publicly funded learners, and those who come from a partner college, well in teaching and learning sessions. A few classrooms are in need of redecoration.
- Managers promote equality and diversity adequately. Learners with different abilities, backgrounds and those with specific educational needs are provided with equally good support and teaching. More could be done to recognise and capture some of the good equality and diversity topics that go on in classes, to promote and share good practice across the college.
- The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The central register has been improved, and part-time tutors and managers are now properly vetted. Appropriate records are kept of incidents and action taken where necessary. Child protection policies and health and safety are promoted adequately.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Blake College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learning programmes
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Visual Arts	2

[illegible]

Additional socio-economic information

Blake College is a small independent privately-owned specialist art and design college situated in Central London. It was established in 1986 as a company limited by guarantee but has recently become a Limited Liability Partnership. The 11 part-time teaching staff and two directors are responsible to the executive director.

Most learners are privately funded; the college also provides training for a small group of learners on behalf of another provider. Both of these groups and the very small number of learners that fell within the scope of the inspection are taught in the same classes. All learners follow advanced-level art and design courses, and they come from a wide variety of social backgrounds and different countries.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Steven Stanley HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the Director of Studies 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, although learner numbers were too small to make valid comparisons with similar providers. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning in visual arts. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

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>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk or if you have any questions about Learner View please email Ofsted at:

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013