

Ruskin Mill College

Independent Specialist College

Inspection dates		19–21 March 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate-4
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Inadequate-4

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is inadequate because:

- Managers and trustees have not taken effective action to bring about overall improvements in the college in response to the increasingly complex needs of the students, and the quality of provision has declined since the last inspection.
- The arrangements to evaluate and monitor all aspects of safeguarding are weak, and the number of significant incidents, including bullying, continues to be too high.
- The lines of accountability and reporting for safeguarding, including the links between the residential and teaching functions, are unclear.
- The arrangements to promote equality and diversity are not working effectively.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Many students progress successfully to their chosen destinations when leaving the college.
- The standards of students' work are good, and sometimes outstanding.
- Very good teaching in many subjects maintains the interest of those students who have previously been disengaged from formal learning settings.
- Programmes of learning are individually designed and make good use of the college's excellent practical resources.
- The therapeutic support is very good and improves students' well-being.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Evaluate and monitor the quality of safeguarding, to include all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety, and use the results to develop strategies to reduce the number of incidents that compromise the safety of students or staff.
- Ensure that more staff working with students receive high level training on the management of challenging behaviours.
- Clarify the lines of accountability and reporting arrangements for safeguarding, including the links between residential and educational provision, so that individual responsibilities are understood and monitored effectively.
- Ensure that strategic planning, quality improvement planning and objective setting across all aspects of the college are specific, with a focus on outcomes rather than a description of actions.
- Ensure that equality and diversity are promoted more effectively by:
 - better collection and use of data in relation to students from Black or minority ethnic groups
 - including equality and diversity in the external risk assessments for work placements
 - focusing in teaching on all aspects of equalities, particularly race and gender, so that students have a better understanding and are better prepared when they leave.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- The great majority of students progress successfully to their chosen and projected destinations. They attend taster sessions at new colleges, explore living accommodation and link with work experience placements prior to leaving the college.
- The standard of students' work is good and sometimes outstanding, particularly in the practical subjects such as welding, where the students produce items to industry standards.
- Students develop their social skills well. They greatly increase their ability to make confident choices, communicate more effectively and begin to manage their own behaviour.
- Students make good progress in gaining a wide range of qualifications in vocational subjects.
- Increasingly, students gain English and mathematics qualifications. However, a minority of students do not progress to a higher level than they had achieved on entry, and staff do not explain in the progress records why this is the case.
- The majority of students take part in a meaningful work placement during their time at college. The developing role of job coaches has enabled more students to take part in external work experience and prepare for transition.
- The college does not yet have a way of demonstrating the progress of the students from their starting points in the college. Targets resulting from termly and annual reviews are often too general. A pilot to capture students' progress more systematically, with a visual presentation, is currently underway.
- The college does not monitor the achievements of all cohorts of students effectively. The monitoring in relation to disability is detailed, identifying no significant gaps. However, the college does not know the ethnicity of many of the students, so it is not possible to identify accurately any gaps in their representation or achievement.
- Attendance and punctuality are good and students enjoy their programmes.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and lead to good outcomes for students. Teachers have high expectations of students, and support and challenge them to develop the skills they need to live a fulfilling life as independently as possible.
- Specialist therapists provide good, very well-tailored support that has a positive impact on students' well-being, confidence and ability to concentrate.
- Support workers provide high levels of individual support to ensure attendance and engagement, particularly for students who have previously been poor attenders in formal settings. However, action plans from holistic meetings to discuss individual students' support are not all sufficiently detailed to improve the speed of their progress.
- The most effective teachers use a wide variety of skilful strategies to engage students' interest, keep students focused, help them to remember past learning and act with increasing independence. These include clear verbal instructions, very good use of questions and discussions, maximising opportunities for choice of activity and breaking down tasks into small stages.
- Attention to workplace health and safety in activities such as welding is very good, although a few instances were also seen where the teacher did not correct lapses in safety practice.
- The monitoring and recording of students' progress require improvement. Initial assessment is thorough, but is not used well as a baseline for planning a student's programme. Students' targets are not specific and the annual reviews do not provide a comprehensive picture of overall achievement since students started at the college. Reviews of progress do not happen frequently enough for students with high levels of need.
- The majority of teachers provide students with helpful feedback on their work. They give frequent, positive and motivating verbal feedback on each small step towards achievement, with clear advice about ways to improve throughout learning tasks. They use questions particularly well to check students' understanding of the reasons why something needs to improve.
- The arrangements to integrate functional skills into sessions are satisfactory. They work well where specialist staff work alongside practical skills and craft teachers to maximise opportunities for learning, particularly specialist technical vocabulary. However, not all teachers are equally skilled at integrating functional skills, as they do not set sufficiently challenging targets and use the language of the accreditation criteria which is not useful for students.
- The promotion of equality and diversity within learning activities requires improvement. Teachers mostly create a constructive atmosphere of mutual respect and strongly promote students' understanding of disability issues, but do not sufficiently develop their awareness of gender, race and age equalities in order to prepare them for life after college.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Trustees and managers promote a very powerful vision, which focuses on providing opportunities for students to develop their potential through the development of practical skills. However, the quality of provision has declined since the last inspection as managers have been slow to respond effectively to the increased complexity of needs of students, and have not reduced sufficiently the proportion of significant safeguarding incidents.
- The trustees bring a wealth of relevant experience to the college and challenge the managers well, requiring monthly updates on progress. They had identified many of the challenges faced by the college and areas for improvement, particularly quality assurance and the weak links between the residential and education provision, but they failed to respond sufficiently early to the signs of risk about safeguarding.

- The college's arrangements for quality assurance are weak. Managers are not fully effective in monitoring all aspects of the provision and maintaining standards, focusing too much on responding to events, rather than analysing causes in order to minimise future occurrences.
- A significant weakness in the quality improvement planning is the failure to identify specific outcomes expected from actions, and to identify the steps needed to achieve them. The self-assessment report is over optimistic in its judgements, and does not give sufficient weighting to the significance of the inconsistencies in practice, the weaknesses in safeguarding and the continuing bullying it has accurately identified.
- The college's observers of teaching and learning are skilled at identifying areas for improvement. However, although much good teaching was observed, the college has not maintained the high quality of teaching that inspectors found at the last inspection. The proforma for observations is too prescriptive and does not prioritise learning.
- Managers plan the curriculum well. Students learn in very small groups, or individually, by undertaking a very wide variety of real practical tasks in organic farming, woodland management, food preparation and crafts. The college's role as a local arts centre also gives students access to a rich mix of music, performing and visual arts.
- Managers have responded very well to the new study programmes, and teachers have started to develop non-accredited provision tailored to the needs of students. Two students have recently started traineeships. All of the programmes are fully individual and flexible, and tutors are able to adjust the programmes as students' requirements change.
- The students have a strong voice in the college, and the representatives from the students' council attend senior management meetings on a monthly basis to raise issues of concern or to make suggestions for improvements, and they make constructive suggestions. They have recently organised a successful event to celebrate World Book Day, and have plans to raise awareness about the health implications of smoking and the consumption of high energy drinks on the campus.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is weak. The managers foster a very inclusive ethos, and members of staff at all levels focus well on aspects of disability. The teaching and support staff have been updated on the most recent legislation, but managers do not have sufficient information about the numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds; teachers do not focus sufficiently on aspects of race, gender and age in lessons and work placement staff do not include equality issues in the risk assessments of external placements.
- The college has a strong focus on anti-discriminatory behaviours and harassment in its policies, but bullying remains a live issue. Students have identified that, although they feel safe because they know who to go to and are confident that staff will respond, the response is sometimes slow. The student council has been active in preparing an anti-bullying leaflet for students to raise awareness of the issues and to provide immediate support for students who experience bullying.
- The college meets the minimum statutory requirements for safeguarding students, but the management of safeguarding is weak and, despite recent action, concerns about safeguarding remain. Lines of accountability in management are unclear, and the links between residential and educational provision, which are separately managed, are not sufficiently robust. The health and safety manager is not a member of the main safeguarding team. Reports to trustees about the overall quality of safeguarding are not sufficiently detailed.
- Incidents that compromise the safety of students and staff are too frequent, and a significant number of these are categorised as serious safeguarding incidents. Individual incident reporting takes place, but managers do not reflect and plan for the reduction of future incidents. Incidents of bullying are not analysed sufficiently and safeguarding action plans do not include specific actions to reduce bullying.
- A recent working group has been set up to track any patterns in the incidents, and new paperwork has very recently been introduced to encourage staff reporting incidents to reflect on

what could be done to prevent incidents occurring. It is too soon to see the impact of these in reducing the number of incidents occurring.

- Students with challenging behaviours are supported individually in lessons, and this helps them to achieve. However, not all students have yet learnt to manage their behaviour when in larger groups around the campus. A small number of staff did not feel confident about responding to incidents of challenging behaviours. Although planned, too few members of staff have received sufficiently high level training about behaviour management.
- Recently, managers have developed improved arrangements to update staff about changes to the risk assessments on individual students, but not all teachers are able to access these when working in the parts of the site that do not have computer access.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Ruskin Mill College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community Learning
Overall effectiveness	4	-	-	4	-	4	-	-	-
Outcomes for learners	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	4	-	-	4	-	4	-	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Foundation Learning	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent Specialist College							
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time 110							
	Part-time 0							
Principal/CEO	Ms Elisabeth Johnson							
Date of previous inspection	20 May 2010							
Website address	www.rmt.org/ruskin							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	46	47	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		2		2			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	-							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Contextual information

Ruskin Mill is part of Ruskin Mill Educational Trust Limited, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee and is one of three colleges owned by the trust. The work of the trust is inspired by William Morris, Rudolf Steiner and John Ruskin. The college is situated on a large site in Gloucestershire and provides a curriculum based on craft activities such as willow, iron and leather work, and land-based activities which include organic horticulture, care of livestock and fish farming. The college provides for students with a range of learning disabilities, emotional needs and challenging behaviours. The complexity of needs of the student cohort has increased significantly since the last inspection. The great majority of students are male.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Joyce Deere HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the resource and administration managers as nominees, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions and took into account all relevant 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 as 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>

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