

# Ruskin Mill College

## Follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 133036

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**Type of provider:** Independent specialist college

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# Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

## Context and focus of visit

This is the third follow-up re-inspection monitoring visit to Ruskin Mill College following publication of the inspection report on 25 April 2014. The inspection found the effectiveness of leadership and management to be inadequate; teaching, learning and assessment were good, as were outcomes for learners. The overall effectiveness of the college was found to be inadequate.

Ruskin Mill College is part of Ruskin Mill Trust Limited. 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 that 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 focus of this visit was to evaluate the experience and understanding of learners in relation to safeguarding and the extent to which they feel safe, know how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they experience bullying, harassment or unwanted attention. This visit also looked at the changes in the senior management structure and the effectiveness of the self-assessment and quality improvement arrangements.

## Themes

### **What progress has been made in ensuring that the safeguarding and health and safety arrangements are effective and all learners are safe and not at risk?**

The safeguarding and welfare of all students is a clear priority for Ruskin Mill College. New students benefit from a more structured induction that reinforces the options available if they have concerns about their safety or well-being, or are worried about someone else. All students spoken to said they feel safe. However, not enough students can describe what feeling safe means to them or what being unsafe might involve. Students understand that bullying and inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated. They know that they can talk to their student journey manager (SJM) or any other member of staff if they have concerns, and they have confidence that they will be listened to and taken seriously. Some year one students reported that even though they experienced bullying at school, no incidents of bullying have occurred since they started at Ruskin Mill College.

Students are positive about the recently-introduced web-based system that allows all staff to record incidents, concerns or achievements, and enables managers to monitor, analyse and respond quickly where necessary. Students can give their views on incidents and feel confident that the new system is fairer and used well by staff. The system continues to improve communication between residential and education staff.

The student council plays an increasingly important role in representing students' views, and members are encouraged to make recommendations about decisions affecting life at Ruskin Mill College. The student voice newsletter includes articles on anti-bullying activities, raising awareness about homophobia and e-safety. While student council members welcome the greater involvement, they need more training to give them the skills to be a highly effective council. Council members take their positions very seriously and feel a high level of responsibility when making recommendations or suggesting activities. New students are aware of the council but are not yet clear about its function nor, in some cases, who their representatives are.

## **Reasonable improvement for learners**

### **What progress has been made in developing strategies to reduce the number of incidents that compromise the safety of students and staff?**

Communication and collaborative working between residential and education staff continue to improve. The regular morning meetings and use of the support and attendance coordinator to report absences or possible late arrivals ensure that education staff can plan and respond appropriately. The reorganisation of the start of the college day, with a reduction in the amount of travel, and its frequency, which students have to undertake between areas of the college site, benefits students as they start their college day with minimal disruption or distractions.

Staff training continues to have a strong emphasis on safeguarding. Specialist training, that enables staff to manage actual or potential aggression, is increasing their confidence in defusing difficult situations. Students are helped to express their anger, frustration or anxiety in a safe and controlled way.

Students are very aware of the risks of using social media and other internet activities. The potential dangers students face and steps necessary to keep themselves safe are regularly discussed and reinforced in the learning environment, in the Ruskin Mill College residences and through the student council newsletter. Specialist software monitors all computer usage, identifies any inappropriate use of the internet and sends reports to the head of technical services for action if necessary.

## **Reasonable improvement for learners**

### **How well do managers evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the provision including all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety?**

The self-assessment report and quality improvement plan now have a stronger emphasis on the students' experience, although a few areas for improvement relate more strongly to management concerns than to the needs of students. Managers are aware that some impact measures require further development; in particular, they need to make better use of available data in order to make judgements about how successful their improvement actions are.

Ruskin Mill College now has its second temporary Principal since the last inspection. All temporary appointees demonstrated a very good understanding of the needs of the students and, with strong support from the trustees, maintained the emphasis on improving the provision and overcoming the identified weaknesses. They worked well with operational staff to implement quality improvement actions, motivate staff and improve morale. Two new assistant principals started at the beginning of the academic year and a permanent Principal is due to start in the middle of November.

### **Reasonable improvement for learners**

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