

# The Ryes College and Community

New Road, Colchester, CO6 3PN

## Inspection dates

25–27 November 2014

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

**2**

Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- Students make good progress with some, including those in the Sixth Form, making outstanding progress.
- Older students do particularly well in gaining nationally recognised and vocational qualifications.
- Teaching is good. Teachers respond effectively to students' varied and often challenging learning needs. They provide activities that capture students' enthusiasm and appeal to their interests.
- Students behave well and work hard in lessons. Pupils and their parents say that the college keeps students safe.
- The college makes good provision for students' personal development and for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It works effectively to ensure students are aware of British values.
- The college provides a range of courses that students find enjoyable and that help them to thrive. Provision for students in the Sixth Form is outstanding.
- The headteacher, college leaders and the proprietor work together effectively to raise the quality of teaching and to bring about improved provision for students.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The revised procedures to streamline the measurement of students' academic progress have not been in place for long enough to impact fully on the progress they make.
- Some students are not entirely clear about how to make their work even better.
- In some lessons students are not given enough opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills.
- Some students do not always arrive at college in sufficient time to be ready for the start of lessons.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of seven lessons and was accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher on all of the observations.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the headteacher, staff with additional responsibilities, teachers and students.
- In addition to observing lessons the inspector looked at the work in students' books and considered information provided by the school about students' attainment and progress.
- Documents were scrutinised which gave details about the college's evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvements, arrangements to keep students safe and details about the range of subjects and activities that students are taught.
- The inspector also considered the opinions expressed by parents and carers in the college's recent survey of their views. The views expressed by staff in 17 inspection questionnaires were also considered. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's on line questionnaire, Parent View, to trigger an analysis.

## Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Ryes College and Community is a much smaller than average school. It is registered to admit up to 24 students in the age range 11 to 19 years; there are currently 21 students on roll.
- Students are taught on two sites; one at the Aldham School site near Colchester and the other just over the border in Suffolk at Pump Farm School in the village of Assington, near Sudbury.
- Almost all students have a statement of provision for their special educational needs. Most students have autistic spectrum disorder. In many cases they have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as well as other disabilities.
- The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than found in most schools. There are currently no students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students in care is much higher than average. Some of these students are housed in children's homes operated by the company that owns the college. The children's homes were inspected at the same time as the college. Their report is published separately.
- Students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are taught from time to time at a range of external providers which comprise of Aldham Church, Barnardo's (for fund raising), Colchester Borough Council, Colchester Rallysports, EYDAS Drugs Awareness, Forest Schools Association, Frisky and Risky, Only Cowards Carry, the NSPCC, the Terence Higgins Trust and West Suffolk College which includes the Leap Centre in Sudbury.
- Students in the Sixth Form are currently educated offsite for part of their time by Butterfly Lodge, Colchester Borough Council, Eden Rose, Otley College, the Princes Trust, West Suffolk College which includes the Leap Centre in Sudbury, Whittle College and the Youth Offending Service.
- The college was last inspected in December 2011.

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

- Fully embed the revised procedures for measuring students' academic progress, so that:
  - teachers are able to respond even more precisely to identifying students' needs and preparing them for the next stages of their learning
  - students become more aware of how to make their work even better.
- Enhance the focus on developing students' basic literacy skills, including their speaking and listening and writing across all subjects.
- Liaise with partner providers to find ways of ensuring that all students are punctual at the start of the college day.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

are good

- The college is led and managed well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In a relatively short time since the headteacher's appointment they have brought about significant improvements in students' progress and behaviour. One long serving member of staff told the inspector, 'The college is the best it has ever been'. The improvements the headteacher has brought about point positively towards the college's capacity to sustain improvements in the future.
- College leaders evaluate its performance accurately. Plans for continued improvement are detailed and targeted at precisely the right areas. The wellbeing of students and making sure they can achieve to the best of their ability, are at the heart of every aspect of the college's work. The college provides suitable information about future careers and opportunities for further education; as a result, students are prepared well to move on to the next stage of their lives.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher conduct frequent checks on the quality of teaching and provide training that leads to improvements. For example, they have recently revised the ways in which students' academic progress is tracked with a view to providing even more precisely for the needs of each one. Staff morale is high and training opportunities are appreciated by all.
- Learning opportunities for all students are highly effective, especially in bringing about improvements in their self confidence and self esteem. No stone is left unturned to find activities that will capture students' enthusiasm and prepare them well for the next stage of their education or for the world of work. A wide range of external providers make a highly effective contribution to this aspect of students' learning and progress. The headteacher and senior staff undertake thorough checks to ensure external providers meet expectations and requirements.
- Arrangements to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are highly effective, including those designed to ensure students have a good understanding of British values. Students have a well developed insight into their own and others cultural traditions. They also have a good understanding of many of the institutions that make up the local community and underpin their wider society, such as the law and social services.
- Parents, the representatives of the local authorities who refer students to the college and those who provide offsite learning opportunities express positive views about the quality of the college's work. In the college's recent survey of parents' views some said they would like more information about their children's progress. With this in mind the college has embarked on providing termly progress reports. These reports are very well received. Parents and carers also appreciate the frequent emails and telephone calls that keep them informed about how their children are getting on.

### ■ The governance of the school:

The proprietor is very knowledgeable about all aspects of the college's work. She provides exceptional support for college leaders; but is also sufficiently well versed to be able to ask searching questions about the quality of the college's work should any aspect become a cause of relative concern. The proprietor knows the qualities and skills of each member of staff well. In addition she is also fully aware of the characteristics and progress of each student.

The colleges work is underpinned by an excellent range of policies. These policies cover all the expected features, are implemented consistently and ensure that the college meets all the requirements of the Independent Schools Standards, including those for the safeguarding of students.

The proprietor also works closely with school leaders to ensure that resources are used wisely, that college premises are in a good state of repair and that good value for money is provided by all major initiatives and innovations.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Many, because of their significant special needs, do not always find it easy to behave well. However, they invariably work hard in lessons and put everything into tackling the work that teachers set for them. At times, when students' behaviour becomes less than acceptable, teachers and other staff respond with care and sensitivity which soon ensures that students are back on course.
- Instances of inappropriate behaviour, especially once new students settle in, become increasingly rare. This is as a result of the students' response to the support they receive to help them to become more independent and responsible for their own behaviour. Students are full of praise for the college. They are proud of their achievements and appreciate that their efforts are recognised and celebrated. As one student commented, 'Since coming to the Ryes College and Community I have become a new person.' Provision for students' personal and social development is exemplary.
- Attendance is below the national average but shows improvement on students' rates of attendance in previous schools. However, a number of students, through no fault of their own, do not always arrive on time for the start of lessons. While not alone the majority of these cases concern students who live at care homes that are directly linked to the college.
- Students' improved attitudes to education are reflected in their willingness to get involved in activities beyond the confines of the school. Students are passionate about their art work and several have sold their paintings at local exhibitions. Students also enjoy music and learning in the outdoors. They are increasingly aware of the circumstances of young people who are less fortunate than themselves. They currently support two children in the Gambia and during the inspection operated a stall on Sudbury market to raise money for their charity of the year, Barnardos.

## Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The current national requirements for safeguarding and for the recruitment of staff are met in full.
- Should the need arise all staff are well trained in the techniques of restraint. The college's response to a recent complaint concerning the use of restraint was praised by officials of the local authority. The college practice was described as 'exemplary.'
- Students say they feel safe and recognise that staff care for them well. This view is also supported by the majority of parents. Bullying in its various forms, racism, the safe use of computers and the internet are all understood well by pupils. Due to the diligence of staff the number of incidents, including the number of students who have been excluded, has decreased markedly over the last year.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers tailor lessons precisely to students' learning needs and to the stage they have reached in their learning. Teachers are expert in coming up with activities that appeal to students and capture their interest. Over time, this creates valuable opportunities for students to respond well to increasingly challenging work.
- Teachers are also expert at anticipating when students are at risk of losing interest and going off course. At such times they are quick to realise what is happening and to change tack. As a result students stay on task and invariably try hard. Teachers are also experts at helping students to become increasingly confident learners by praising their efforts which raises their self-confidence and their self-esteem.
- The essential basic skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing, mathematics and information and communication technology are all taught to good effect. Older students often produce their best writing when they use a word processor. Their success in this respect is helping to increase their confidence. Even so, progress in English is not as swift as that in mathematics. There are times, in lessons across the curriculum, when opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to speak, to respond thoughtfully to questions or to discuss their thoughts with their classmates.

- Arrangements to assess students' attainment and progress are evolving well. Assessments are accurate and undertaken frequently. However, some of the revised procedures for checking on students' academic development have not had long enough to impact fully on their progress. As a result in some lessons students are not made sufficiently aware about how they might make their work even better. That said, students greatly appreciate the recognition of their progress and the rewards they receive for working hard.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Because they have missed much of their previous education and because of their very challenging special educational needs, students usually start at the college with attainment that is much lower than that expected for their age. At all stages attainment continues to lag behind age-related expectations. However, students, including the most able and those with the most challenging special needs and disabilities, consistently make good progress from their various starting points.
- Progress for the majority of students is good with some students progressing exceptionally well. Students' progress is affirmed by the work seen during lessons and in their books. The college's data about students' progress is also validated by a highly reliable university education department which compares students' progress with that found in similar schools. This comparison affirms that many students make better progress than their counterparts in similar schools.
- The majority of students acquire the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology well. However, there is clear evidence, during lessons and in students' books, that progress in English, across a range of subjects, is not as strong as in mathematics.
- Progress towards gaining nationally recognised qualifications and vocational awards is good. This is because the courses chosen are linked precisely to students learning needs and interests, including the needs of those who face the most challenging special educational needs. These courses include foundation level GCSEs as well as ASDAN and BTEC qualifications. Good progress is evident when students are taught on the school site and when they are taught at alternative, offsite provision.

### The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The Sixth Form benefits from the same high quality of leadership as the rest of the college. College leaders, teachers and other staff strive constantly to bring about improvements in the quality of provision. For instance, by seeking to further widen the already highly effective range of accreditations and vocational courses that students can follow.
- Central to the success of the Sixth Form is the way in which college staff work tirelessly to find courses that capture students' interests and provide them with skills that will be valuable in the world of work and in later life. This means there is something of value that meets the needs of each student.
- Behaviour and safety for students in the Sixth Form is excellent. Despite the significant challenges they face, students work hard during lessons. They do their best to stay focused and to concentrate on the task at hand. They are proud of their achievements and very committed to doing the best they can.
- Teaching in the Sixth Form is outstanding. Teachers are highly skilled at modifying their approach and adapting to the way in which students respond. Teachers often anticipate when students are at risk of losing focus and modify tasks to keep students on the right track.
- Students in the Sixth Form achieve exceptionally well, making outstanding progress from, what for many, are very low starting points. Often students' progress accelerates in the Sixth Form. Significant strides are made in the acquisition of communication skills and this is especially true in terms of students' abilities to speak and to listen. Strong progress is also noted in a wide range of accredited courses and in completing

valuable vocational qualifications. This is particularly evident in the nationally recognised certificates, such as ASDAN and BTEC that student gain, the work in their books and in the variety of artefacts and products they make and often sell. For example, their art work and the cakes and bird boxes they produce.

## What inspection judgements mean

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

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115427
<b>Inspection number</b>	446383
<b>DfE registration number</b>	881/6033

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary special school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	21
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	4
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	Kate Yarbo
<b>Chair</b>	Kate Yarbo
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Larkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 December 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£37856
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 243473
<b>Fax number</b>	01206 243401
<b>Email address</b>	zoe.gant@theryescollege.org.uk; alison.larkins@theryescollege.org.uk

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