

# 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 fourth 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 students. 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 leatherwork, and land-based activities that include biodynamic horticulture, care of livestock and fish farming. The college provides for students with a range of learning disabilities, emotional needs and challenging behaviours.

## **Themes**

### **What progress has been made in evaluating all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety and in reducing the number of incidents that compromise the safety and health of students?**

Managers and staff continue to build on the early improvements made in safeguarding. The vast majority of students across the college and in residential accommodation feel safe and know what feeling safe means within the college and residential setting. The appointment of an additional safeguarding manager with good experience and expertise in safeguarding in other situations brings a more rigorous approach to the quality assurance of safeguarding. The involvement by students in promoting and reinforcing safeguarding is now well established. Articles and notices appear in the student magazine on a variety of topics including bullying and e-safety.

Education and residential staff make very effective use of the web-based behaviour reporting system to share information and report incidents. This enables staff to respond quickly and effectively to safeguarding and health and safety incidents or other concerns. Managers and staff use safeguarding data effectively to plan training and review behavioural and support strategies; the data are also used to improve the evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding, and identify where further work is required.

Formal training sessions give staff the skills and confidence to deal with difficult or potentially dangerous circumstances and contribute to the safer and calmer environment for students. Staff identify potential difficult or stressful situations for students and make suitable plans to minimise any distress or anxieties. For example, before students receive information that could trigger a very negative response, staff agree who will give the information, organise the layout of the environment, discuss

how they will talk to the student and identify any support needed following the meeting.

The new safeguarding manager is now a member of the admissions panel and safeguarding has a greater emphasis during the admissions process. Parents, carers and students are more involved in agreeing the outcomes from the admissions risk assessment. Admissions staff take good account of the mental capacity of each applicant when devising and agreeing the initial individual learning plan. The role and expectations of commissioning local authorities are more clearly defined. When students leave the college, and during holidays, staff identify the support and resources required to sustain and build on the progress made by students. However, as no students have left since this improvement it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this development.

### **Significant improvement for students**

#### **What progress has been made in clarifying and improving the lines of accountability and reporting arrangements between residential and educational provision, so that individual responsibilities are understood and monitored effectively?**

The closer working relationship between the head of residential manager and the deputy principal has resulted in a more collaborative and cooperative approach to meeting the individual needs of students. College staff have a good understanding of how the contributions of the educational and residential provision need to be coordinated effectively. Staff recognise that a clear emphasis on how both elements of the provision contribute to the achievement of learning goals is fundamental if students are to reach their full potential. The training given to residential and college staff continues to reinforce the need for all staff to have a consistent approach to meeting the needs of students.

The involvement of a deputy principal, the head of residential manager and a member of the college's Pathways team in the admission arrangements increases the likelihood that agreed learning plans will have a strong emphasis on the likely destination of the student and how all parts of the college contribute to successful outcomes.

Managers are revising the method for the recognition and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) so that short-, medium- and long-term goal planning are more personalised and focused on students' intended destinations. This work is at an early stage and the college will need to ensure that the paperwork, including the one-page profiles, supports the process; and that education and residential staff are clear about how their work contributes to the achievement of students' goals and their successful transition beyond Ruskin Mill College.

### **Reasonable improvement for students**

## **Leadership and management**

The new Principal recognised that the previous organisational structure was not fully meeting the needs of students. He has taken decisive action by strengthening the roles relating to admissions to the college, and by revising the management of the transition of students to their next stage after leaving Ruskin Mill College. The new role of education learning coordinator (ELC) has a much greater emphasis on supporting the learning process. Managers intend that ELCs will make better use of well-being, therapy and safeguarding specialists to ensure that students make good progress and achieve their learning goals.

Managers recognise that not all students benefit from good preparation for their next stage or are able to make fully informed choices about the opportunities available to them. As a result of the restructure, the Pathways team now has responsibility for ensuring that students progress to a positive destination. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this development.

The new Principal has revised the previous self-assessment report and quality improvement plan. The revised documents are more evaluative, self-critical and clearly identify the priorities for action. The quality improvement plan has a good emphasis on the needs of students, but some action points need revision to identify clearly the benefit to students.

College leaders have developed stronger arrangements for managing staff performance. This process now makes better links between the work of staff and its impact on students' experience at the college, and its contribution to key college targets. Observations of learning are becoming rigorous and are more closely linked to the impact on individual students and on college-wide improvements. As with other recent initiatives, the effectiveness of performance management could not be judged at the time of the monitoring visit.

Managers correctly identified that further work is required to ensure that all staff have the appropriate skills, understanding and expertise necessary for all students to improve their English and mathematical skills. Similarly, the responsibility for all relevant staff to provide good or better information, advice and guidance to students, so that they can make informed choices about their futures, is now an identified priority for action.

## **Reasonable improvement for students**

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