

# Ruskin Mill College

## Independent specialist college

|                                              |                         |                |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b>                      |                         | 18–20 May 2015 |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>This inspection:</b> | <b>Good-2</b>  |
|                                              | Previous inspection:    | Inadequate-4   |
| Outcomes for learners                        |                         | Good-2         |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment |                         | Good-2         |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   |                         | Good-2         |

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- students make good progress in developing their communication, personal and practical skills; they improve their behaviour, independence and the way they interact with each other and the wider community
- most students achieve a good range of skills and qualifications in practical land management, crafts, creative activities and in English and mathematics
- the standard of students' practical work is consistently good, and often outstanding
- students develop good employability skills through well-managed work experience opportunities, internally and with local employers
- the very good use of the college environment motivates students and helps them overcome the fears and anxieties that stop them from learning and achieving their potential
- senior leaders and trustees set high standards and take effective action to identify and improve areas of weakness.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- students' targets and goals are not always sufficiently individualised to plan learning and demonstrate the progress students make
- in too many lessons, support workers are not given sufficient guidance to enable them to be fully effective in their role
- the information on all students' destinations is incomplete and the college cannot judge the long-term effectiveness of its work
- the wider use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support learning is under developed.

## Full report

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

- Make the sharing of good and effective practice across the college more frequent and systematic, so that staff improve their skills and confidence and students benefit from a consistently high standard of teaching and learning.
- Review and strengthen the procedures for collecting and collating the information on the destinations of students when they leave Ruskin Mill in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the current curriculum and plan further improvements.
- Ensure that medium-and long-term goals are clearly linked to the individual needs and aspirations of students and are suitably specific to enable teachers to plan learning activities that contribute to the achievement of students' goals.

### Inspection judgements

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b> | Good |
|------------------------------|------|

- The college provides personalised study programmes for students aged 16–19 and learning programmes for older students. Just under half of the current students follow study programmes and all qualifications are at level 1 or below.
- Students continue to make good progress since the last inspection in the development of personal, social and independence skills. They learn to manage their anxieties and behaviour and cooperate successfully with their peers; their communication skills improve significantly and they become able to speak with greater confidence in different situations and with unfamiliar people.
- The college systems for establishing individual students' starting points in key areas, including communication, social skills and English and mathematics, are good and effective. Parents, carers, commissioners and other stakeholders now receive more frequent and visual reports on progress and achievements.
- Students increasingly achieve a wide variety of skills and qualifications in practical land management, animal husbandry, wood and metalwork, creative arts and in English and mathematics, by working to challenging and stimulating short-term targets.
- The standard of students' practical and design work is consistently good, and often outstanding. Students produce wood and metal items of industry standard; their craft work in leather and wool is attractive and well designed; their art work in a wide variety of media, including clay and stained glass, is skilfully executed and imaginatively conceived.
- The large majority of students develop the necessary skills to progress to the next level of study or into employment. The increased number of substantial work experience placements internally to the college and in the wider community, as well the varied practical skills courses within college, provide students with a wide range of opportunities to build confidence and to try new ways of working and problem solving.
- Since the last inspection students have significantly increased their awareness of equality and diversity matters; incidences fuelled by bullying and discrimination have fallen; students understand and can confront their own attitudes and can moderate their behaviour with good effect.
- Retention is very high. The strong, college-wide focus on improving attendance and punctuality resulted in both these areas significantly improving since the last inspection to become good. Students know that teachers will challenge lateness and non-arrival at lessons and staff routinely discuss any underlying reasons why individual students may be reluctant to attend.

- Currently, managers know too little about students' sustainable destinations. The college recently sampled a selection of ex-students to find out their circumstances after leaving college. However, it does not have sufficiently detailed information to judge the long-term effectiveness of the Ruskin Mill College experience on students' lives.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and leads to good outcomes for students. Staff have high expectations of students and provide individualised teaching and support which enables students to succeed.
- Most teachers plan their lessons well to meet the individual needs of students, by providing individual tasks and goals. Many lessons have clear targets for all students, but this is not universal. The very best lessons provide plenty of challenge for students, with clear short-term targets for each individual to achieve. Teachers integrate equality and diversity strands well in these lessons. Students develop high-level skills and, in practical lessons, produce work to a very high standard.
- The most effective teachers bring out the best in students. In a particularly good horticultural lesson, students demonstrated high-level employability skills and a sound knowledge of the processes for growing beans. The most effective teachers provide clear instructions and break tasks down into small parts to ensure students can complete each stage before moving on. These teachers use questioning well to test students' knowledge and understanding but also to extend learning. However, a significant minority of teachers are not proficient at using questioning and discussions to extend learning.
- Good teaching combined with a very effective use of the college environment enables students to develop traditional craft and land-based skills to a very high standard. The resources to support equality and diversity on display around the college are particularly good in promoting positive role models and reinforcing key messages such as those about bullying. The college acknowledges that the resources for the craft, design and technology courses need significant investment and that greater use should be made of information technology to complement the students' experience.
- Specialist therapists provide particularly good support, including counselling, that directly contributes to students coping better in lessons and achieving high levels of success.
- In the more effective lessons, teachers give very clear directions to the learning support assistants (LSAs). In these lessons, LSAs work well with students, providing good support and using questioning well to test understanding. This was particularly good in horticulture and the fisheries lessons. However, in too many lessons, teachers do not make best use of the LSAs' time and some LSAs do not have the skills to be able to support students with their activities in the practical workshops.
- Education learning coordinators (ELCs) facilitate very good communication between learners, teachers, support staff and others. For example, where appropriate, ELCs will work alongside students and hold progress reviews on the farm, in the forge, in classrooms or other learning environments.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics are good in both areas. Learning is highly individualised, as well as being integrated into students' main programmes. In the best practice, specialist teachers of English make explicit use of the practical subjects that students study to motivate and inspire them. Mathematics techniques are increasingly incorporated into lessons as teachers become more confident and skilled at linking the use of mathematics to other learning activities. Individual ICT goals for students are still in development.
- The monitoring and recording of students' progress are much improved. Teachers complete detailed evaluations with students at the end every lesson, focusing on students' individual achievements of targets. Although teachers are skilled in writing clear short-term targets for students, many of the medium-term targets are not precise enough.

- Frequent feedback and positive reinforcement from teachers in lessons and on students' work helps students make good progress.
- The initial assessment procedures are thorough, provide greater detail than previous approaches and include a wider range of staff. The information from the initial and baseline assessments ensures students work at the appropriate level and that the necessary learning and therapeutic support is in place. However, the college does not yet have an effective way of assessing the starting points of new students below entry level.
- Initial advice and guidance and transition planning are now good and comprehensive. Transition planning starts early and is integral to students' study programmes. Work experience opportunities, which have greatly increased, are firmly based on students' interests and future career choices.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the inspection, trustees and managers have worked tirelessly to raise standards, ensure students are safe and improve the overall experience for learners. Strong and decisive management actions to restructure the college created a good working relationship between the residential and education parts of the college. The focus on enabling students overcome their barriers to learning is relentless. Despite the difficulties and uncertainties faced by the college since the last inspection, the majority of staff remain motivated and positive.
- Trustees scrutinise the work of the college effectively and hold senior leaders to account well. Since the last inspection, the board of trustees broadened the experience and expertise of the membership. The improved reporting arrangements and use of data enable them to understand what areas of the college are performing well and where improvements are required. Some trustees now have formal links with key areas of the college, including safeguarding. Trustees have good and regular contact with students.
- Leaders, managers and staff are developing a culture of high standards where inappropriate behaviour and language, poor punctuality and unauthorised absences are not tolerated. The well-managed study and learning programmes take good account of the complex and fluctuating conditions that make learning difficult for students. The recent changes to curriculum include offering a good range of relevant qualifications, developing more personalised targets and the good involvement of all relevant staff in recording progress and recognising achievement.
- Staff training and professional development are good. Staff benefit from good practical training activities to develop the specific skills needed to meet students' needs. The college now hosts a research centre that provides opportunities for college staff and others to gain masters or PhD qualifications in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education (PSTE).
- Performance management is rigorous, with a strong emphasis on improving the lives of students. Staff now understand line management responsibilities. The simplified approach to setting performance targets is resulting in staff identifying their own improvement objectives and being clearer about their contributions to the college priorities.
- The most recent self-assessment report is a significant improvement on reports produced since the last inspection. The leadership team produced an accurate analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement, clearly identifying the priorities for action, the resources required and the staff skills necessary for the provision to continue improving.
- The student voice remains strong within the college. Members of the student council have clear and sensible views on what the college does well and how it could improve. The student council is increasingly involved in advising trustees and managers; the members recently took the initiative to improve the energy efficiency of the college.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are now good. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated. The high levels of bullying identified at the last inspection have significantly reduced. Staff take quick and decisive action when bullying occurs. If staff have

concerns about any student's understanding of equality and diversity, or anyone exhibits racist, homophobic or other unacceptable behaviour, they take part in a series of well-structured activities to help the student understand why respect and tolerance are important. The activities help students empathise with other people and give them strategies to decrease the likelihood of incidents reoccurring.

- Students play an increasingly important role in promoting an understanding of equality and diversity. Student council members played a key role during autism awareness week. They have organised world food days and checked displays and resources around the college. The involvement with a theatre group, to develop a greater understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, was very successful in raising awareness and promoting discussion across the college.
- Safeguarding arrangements are now very good and meet statutory requirements. The recently appointed safeguarding manager has a very strong professional background and a clear vision of the standards and practice required to create an environment where learners feel safe, know what is expected of them and what to do if they feel unsafe in college, the residences or at home and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Staff no longer ignore inappropriate behaviour or language and, as a result of good training and support, are more confident when dealing with unacceptable actions by students. Attendance coordinators are now an integral part of the safeguarding team. They work very effectively with ELCs, tutors and residential staff, responding quickly and effectively to notifications of absences or poor punctuality and analysing any underlying reasons for poor, declining or erratic attendance.
- The number of reported severe safeguarding incidents is now low. Staff received suitable e-safety training and have a satisfactory awareness of what students need to do to keep safe online, and the risks they face when using social media. However, very little use is made of information technology in the college setting, where learners can develop their e-safety knowledge and practice in a supportive and secure environment. Where safeguarding concerns are identified that relates to the students' homes, staff will work with students and their parents or carers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Ruskin Mill College

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

| <b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b> | <b>Grade</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Independent living and leisure skills</b>                                     | <b>2</b>     |

## Provider details

|                                                                                                 |                                |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|----------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| <b>Type of provider</b>                                                                         | Independent specialist college |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Age range of learners</b>                                                                    | 16+                            |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>                  | 91                             |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Principal/CEO</b>                                                                            | Mr Dan Alipaz                  |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                                                              | March 2014                     |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Website address</b>                                                                          | www.rmt.org                    |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>                                       |                                |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Main course or learning programme level</b>                                                  | <b>Level 1 or below</b>        |     | <b>Level 2</b>  |     | <b>Level 3</b> |     | <b>Level 4 and above</b> |     |
| <b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>                                     | 16-18                          | 19+ | 16-18           | 19+ | 16-18          | 19+ | 16-18                    | 19+ |
|                                                                                                 | 33                             | 38  | -               | -   | -              | -   | -                        | -   |
| <b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>                                    | <b>Intermediate</b>            |     | <b>Advanced</b> |     | <b>Higher</b>  |     |                          |     |
|                                                                                                 | 16-18                          | 19+ | 16-18           | 19+ | 16-18          | 19+ |                          |     |
|                                                                                                 | -                              | -   | -               | -   | -              | -   |                          |     |
| <b>Number of traineeships</b>                                                                   | 16-19                          |     | 19+             |     | Total          |     |                          |     |
|                                                                                                 | -                              |     | -               |     | -              |     |                          |     |
| <b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>                                                            |                                |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Full-time</b>                                                                                | -                              |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Part-time</b>                                                                                | -                              |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Number of community learners</b>                                                             | -                              |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Number of employability learners</b>                                                         | -                              |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>Funding received from</b>                                                                    | Education Funding Agency (EFA) |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |
| <b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b> | None                           |     |                 |     |                |     |                          |     |

## Contextual Information

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 textiles, and land-based activities that include biodynamic agriculture, care of livestock and fish farming. The college draws inspiration from Rudolph Steiner's educational methods and provides for residential and day students aged 16–25 with a range of learning disabilities, emotional needs and challenging behaviours, including autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy, dyspraxia, Asperger's syndrome, speech, communication difficulties and poor mental health.

## Information about this inspection

|                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Lead inspector</b> | Nigel Evans HMI |
|-----------------------|-----------------|

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the Principal as nominee, 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 over the last three years 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, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection 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 areas 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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