

# Glasshouse College

Independent specialist college

## Inspection dates

17–19 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good |
| Outcomes for learners                        | Good |
| Provision for learners with high needs       | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Students make good progress through highly effective teaching and learning, the high expectations of staff, and a purposeful, customised and practical craft-based curriculum.
- The standard of work produced in practical workshops is high; students' work from Iron Age forge, glass-blowing and glass-cutting is particularly creative and challenging.
- Most students make great improvement in their levels of independence and in improving and managing their behaviour.
- Trustees have a strong and ambitious vision for the college; they have a good understanding of the complex nature of the college and take decisive and effective action to maintain high standards and the quality of provision.
- Students' progression after college is good: almost half go on to live semi- or fully independently; the majority progress to further study, employment and volunteering.
- Students benefit from a wide range of practical activities in industry-standard environments, supported well by highly skilled tutors and effective support workers; as a result they develop good personal, social and employability skills.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Tutors do not record and measure students' progress well enough to identify those that do not make the expected progress and those that exceed expectations; managers do not use this information routinely and systematically to inform interventions and improvement actions, or to share best practice.
- Managers do not capture and use management information sufficiently well to inform the self-assessment process; this results in a measure of inaccuracy and imprecision in improvement planning.
- Management information reports to trustees and leaders are not sufficiently robust or complete to enable them to monitor and measure effectively the progress of all groups of students and ensure that they all achieve; or to monitor the impact of the provision on students' destinations after they leave the college.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Glasshouse College is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust (RMT). The college opened in 2000 for young people with disabilities, learning difficulties and a range of complex needs. It is a medium-sized specialist independent day and residential college. The main site is situated in a former glassworks in Stourbridge; the second site, Argent College, is situated in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham. The college currently runs provision for 98 students from a wide geographical area. One student is funded by the Welsh Government, with the remainder funded by the Education Funding Agency through local authorities.
- Currently, 69 day students and 29 residential students live with their peers or with families in the local community. During their programme students can progress to training-flat placements, where they have the opportunity to take greater responsibility for themselves. Some 15% of college students are of minority ethnic heritage and 72% are male.

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

- Stabilise the senior leadership team in order to consolidate and further improve the quality of provision.
- Ensure that tutors record more frequently students' progress and achievements, and present the information in clear enough formats so that students understand and remember what they need to do next to refine their practical or social skills, communication and behaviour; ensure that all parents and carers are well informed of students' progress and achievements.
- Ensure that managers collect the right data and measure the right activities in order to:
  - support more precise and accurate oversight and self-evaluation of the provision
  - provide trustees with accurate and sufficiently detailed information.
- Use the resulting self-evaluation to plan and make improvements to the provision and to enable trustees to hold leaders and managers more precisely to account, leaders and managers should:
  - use information and data to ensure that all students make very good progress according to their potential
  - ensure that support workers provide highly effective support in all learning settings
  - share best practice across the college
  - establish and record the destinations of all students when they leave the college
  - involve and formally include the views of staff, employers, other stakeholders and parents and carers in the self-assessment process.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- All staff, managers and trustees have high expectations of students and reinforce high standards across the college. The practical, craft-based learning is particularly effective in developing and reinforcing the skills necessary for a more independent life. The practical workshops are excellent; they are well resourced and reflect industry standards. Students' customised learning experiences at college and in residential settings help them to identify, recognise and achieve their potential. They develop their ability to use specialist tools to perform skilled tasks, such as engraving glass and weaving baskets. They follow instructions and work safely on potentially dangerous tasks such as glass-blowing, and interact well with their peers in music and drama workshops and therapy sessions.
- The impact of leadership and management on the quality of the provision at Glasshouse College is evident in the good quality of the students' experience and the good progress they make in their learning, personal development, behaviour and welfare. Overall, the numerous changes in personnel in the senior leadership team over the past two years have not had a destabilising effect on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the college. However, in order to consolidate and improve further the current good provision, trustees, leaders and managers must seek to stabilise the leadership of the college.
- Leaders have an appropriately self-critical approach to self-assessment and improvement planning. However, managers do not always collect the right information or measure the right aspects. For example, they do not formally include the views of staff, employers, parents and carers in the self-assessment process. This results in a measure of inaccuracy in self-assessment and imprecision in improvement planning, demonstrated by managers not knowing if all students are exceeding or not meeting the level of progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders, managers and trustees do not sufficiently monitor the progress of groups of students to ensure that no group is disadvantaged or underachieves. The capturing and monitoring of students' performance data to inform management decision-making is insufficient.
- Leaders' and managers' actions to secure and sustain improvements in learning and assessment are effective. They have begun to make significant changes to the staffing structure and to the curriculum offer. The aim is to develop further a culture that focuses on students achieving their educational and personal targets which are linked clearly to their long-term ambitions. Managers have recently developed a new assessment process to improve the recording and measuring of students' progress. Tutors are required to set sufficiently challenging targets and support students to achieve these. However, it is too soon to see the impact of the new assessment process on managers' ability to monitor students' progress more closely.
- Managers' observations of the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities are regular and rigorous. Their records clearly identify the key strengths and areas for development and the impact of teaching on students' progress. Managers acknowledge that the assessment of the effectiveness of support workers in all learning settings does not provide clear and precise oversight of their impact on learning and progress.
- Leaders and managers use feedback from students well to inform changes to the curriculum. For example, students requested the opportunity to develop further their information technology (IT) skills. Managers developed a partnership with a commercial IT company, which resulted in a new computer suite, the introduction of discrete IT courses and students working towards achieving accredited IT qualifications.
- Leaders and managers ensure that additional funding supports each student effectively on their learning programme.
- Leaders and managers work effectively with a wide range of partners, including local and national, statutory and voluntary organisations, employers and the local community. As a result, many residential students live with local people and all students develop further their personal, social and employability skills through purposeful work experience and regular interaction with the local community. For example, one student works at the glass heritage centre where he repairs and restores original glass moulds for public viewing. Other students work at cafes, the animal sanctuary, a boarding kennel and a number of garages in the local community. A former student has progressed to a mainstream course at a local further education college, and continues to volunteer at the heritage centre, providing visitors with information tours.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - The trustees have a strong vision and plan for the future; they have carefully considered and implemented effective succession planning to ensure that a stable leadership team can enable the

college provision to move forward and remain sustainable for the future.

- Trustees have a clear understanding of their strategic role in the management of the college. They have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and have taken decisive action to ensure that the quality of learning is maintained.
- Trustees have a broad range of experience and expertise which they use well to advise on improvements, such as the observation of teaching and learning. They scrutinise the work and performance of leaders and managers well. However, the quality of management information is insufficient for trustees to hold leaders and managers to account for ensuring that all students make at least the expected progress, and to monitor students' destinations.

#### ■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Staff work hard to ensure that students are kept safe. A strong culture of safeguarding exists, particularly in the practical workshops. Policies on safeguarding are appropriate and reviewed regularly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and strongly focused on the needs of the students. Records of checks, including on criminal records, are up to date and accurate for staff, work experience employers, volunteers and community members that provide students with residential accommodation.
- The safeguarding manager works in effective partnership with external local agencies. Managers and staff handle safeguarding incidents and referrals professionally and sensitively. Managers take appropriate actions; where necessary, referrals to external agencies are timely, well-recorded and closely monitored to ensure that concerns are dealt with appropriately.
- Trustees receive a higher-level analysis of the safeguarding issues each week and use this information well to inform their decision-making and strategic planning.
- Staff have regular training on a wide range of safeguarding topics, such as the 'Prevent' duty, the Mental Capacity Act, and equality and diversity. Staff administering prescription medication to students are well trained and adopt safe practices.
- Students feel safe and trust that the college will act on their concerns when they are raised.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- Staff have high expectations of students. They have designed a diverse, challenging curriculum with a strong focus on developing students' confidence and self-worth. Students improve their skills for independent living and prepare well for adult life.
- Well-qualified tutors very effectively use their expertise and wealth of experience in, for example, glass-blowing and cutting, weaving, music and farming, to provide interesting and challenging learning. They plan practical lessons carefully so that students become technically proficient over time and improve their fine-motor skills and coordination in real working environments. In a glass engraving workshop, individual student work shows clear evidence that students are improving their skills and producing work at a professional standard.
- Tutors use questioning techniques well to extend students' thinking skills and their ability to develop new skills. In a music class, one student learned to play the guitar and keep time. Skilled questioning on the use of marker dots on the guitar fretboard enabled this learner to remember two new chords and gain confidence changing between them.
- Tutors know their students well. They make good use of detailed initial assessments and comprehensive information from specialist agencies, parents, carers and local authorities to plan detailed, individual learning programmes. They work closely with well-trained support workers so that students can benefit as much as possible from the wide variety of learning activities offered.
- Staff promote positive behaviour and care for others through all aspects of the programme and in all learning settings. For example, in the morning 'welcome circle', students develop the skill of greeting each other, identify their day's activities and reinforce the enjoyment of being part of a group. Staff challenge disagreements between students promptly as a result of which, students develop a greater understanding and tolerance of others and the society in which they live. In a session at Vale Head Farm, four students worked well as part of a team and handled goats confidently and safely. Students moved in and out of feeding pens safely, closed gates routinely, emptied troughs and refilled them expertly.
- Students make good progress and greatly enjoy developing technical and practical skills. In a glass-cutting class, a student practised marking and then cutting a new design. He received clear feedback from the teacher. However, the teacher did not encourage him to compare his latest work with his previous attempts, to extend his own evaluative skills and build his confidence.

- Staff do not record students' progress and achievements sufficiently well. Teachers do not set all students sufficiently detailed targets to enable them to progress as quickly as they are able. Staff provide students with positive verbal feedback, and discuss informally their improvement in practical, personal and social skills. However, students do not always have enough information about their progress and it is not written in a clear enough format for them to understand and remember what they need to do next to refine their practical or social skills, communication and behaviour.
- Students practise and improve their English and mathematics skills well through naturally occurring tasks within their practical sessions. At Vale Head Farm, a group of students worked effectively as a team, reading feeding instructions and accurately measuring and weighing food quantities for different groups of goats. However, tutors do not always use individual assessment information well enough to plan activities against specific literacy and numeracy targets.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

- Students take pride in their life and work at the college. All students access vocational programmes, learning in well-equipped and industry-standard settings. They develop a wide range of transferable employability skills and benefit from work experience placements on college sites at the farm, in glass workshops, kitchens and horticultural settings.
- Many students access purposeful external work placements with a range of small business enterprises that share the main college site. These include the Glass Heritage Centre, working with glass engravers, creative woodworkers, soap makers and enamel workers. The college has expanded year-on-year student placements in the wider community, such as in cafes, animal centres and retail units.
- The college provides a broad range of therapies to support students' development. As a result, they are able to develop strategies to manage their own behaviour and develop their communication skills more effectively. Students make good progress over time which enables levels of support to be reduced significantly. This prepares students very well for moving on from college. For example, equine therapy is used successfully with students visiting a local horse and donkey sanctuary. Students work with the horses and walk with them in a safe and calming environment.
- All students have speech and language assessments. Speech and language therapists support tutors and support workers well to develop key communication strategies with individual students. Staff use visual and symbol prompts effectively to engage students and support the development of their communication skills. Staff create and provide students with helpful individual story books which support their self-management of challenging situations or behaviours.
- The learning of English, mathematics and verbal communication skills occurs in all areas of learning, with one-to-one discrete provision provided to students when required. In a numeracy session, one student developed his money-handling skills and he was able to recognise a range of coins that could be used to pay for an item. The tutor used highly effective questioning to encourage and prompt the student to identify 1p, 10p and 20p pieces to find the smallest number of coins to use. The student was given time to process and reflect, and responded successfully.
- Students and staff demonstrate good levels of respect for each other. For example, Argent College is running a short empowerment course for female students. This is run by a young peer mentor. The course considers the roles of men and women and celebrates being female.
- Staff support learners well to access faith meetings, specialist food markets and quiet rooms for prayer and reflection. Staff ensure that students' dietary needs are met. The college provides individual food preparation areas to ensure that students are able to follow their religious practices. The college manages the storage and administering of medication very well, with all medicines kept in locked cabinets and in secure environments with limited access. The controlled drugs records are detailed and maintained appropriately. Staff have a strict handover policy and practice to ensure that they record clearly medication given to students and received from parents or carers.
- Staff inform the majority of parents and carers well regarding students' progress. Communication between the college and parents and carers is mostly effective. Students and their parents are actively engaged in the planning for their transfer on entry to the college and when they have completed their courses. This is to ensure that the individual needs of the student are met effectively.
- Students enjoy a range of enrichment activities at weekends and evenings, with a strong focus on student choice and a link to their personal interests. These activities include regular gym sessions, mountain biking, 'open mic' nights, bingo and fishing. One student regularly visits a small, local airfield cafe. This builds his confidence, social skills and improves his knowledge of aeroplanes.
- The college has a strong focus on healthy living and eating. Students have good awareness of the stages involved in taking food from the field to the table. Fresh vegetables, fruit and meat from the Vale Head

Farm are used in the residential houses and the college kitchens and cafes. Plans have been approved for a substantial roof-top garden, a cafe and a commercial bakery at Argent College. The new facilities will offer further opportunities for students to build their skills as well as provide a service to the local community.

- Students' educational health-care plans contain long-term aims and aspirations for students which staff use well to plan learning programmes. However, short-term goals are insufficiently broken down into milestones to capture progress effectively. Progress reviews describe rather than evaluate the progress students actually make, as shown in their workbooks and by the high-quality products that they make.
- Students make good progress in their daily-living skills and receive good support to move out of supported housing into more independent living accommodation, which prepares them for life after college.
- Most students attend regularly and are punctual for sessions. The college monitors students' attendance carefully. The few students with lower rates receive attendance and punctuality targets which staff regularly review; as a result, their attendance is improving.
- Students learn the importance of health, safety and hygiene in all areas of their practical work and in daily-living skills at the residences. Staff support students well to work very safely in high-risk environments. For example, students work in the glass-blowing workshop with molten glass and furnaces, under the supervision of very experienced staff.
- Students feel safe in college. However, a few students are unclear about the sanctions that staff impose on a very small minority of their peers when they display inappropriate behaviour. Too much information that is displayed around the college is not in a suitable format for students to understand. For example, student information posters are written in capitals with no visual prompts.

## Outcomes for learners

are good

- Glasshouse College prepares students well for their next stages. In the year 2014/15, most students progressed onto their intended destinations; almost half progressed to semi-independent living or are living independently. The majority of students progressed to paid or voluntary employment, further learning at a college or other vocational training; only a few were not able to sustain unsupported work due to the level or complexity of their disability. However, leaders and managers do not know the destinations of around a quarter of students.
- Most students make good progress as a result of well-structured, purposeful, stimulating learning sessions that develop a wide range of skills and recognise achievement. For example, one student exceeded his medium-term goal to live semi-independently and to work as a carpenter. After leaving the college he is studying level 2 carpentry and joinery at a local further education college, has part-time paid employment and lives independently.
- The thorough and wide-ranging assessment of students' starting points, and the identification of their barriers to learning and their individual support needs are highly effective. However, tutors do not record consistently well in weekly reports how well the students make progress. Insufficiently detailed data and management information also contribute to difficulties in the overall assessment of students. Managers are not able to identify those students that exceed expectations and those that do not make the expected progress; not all students are consistently clear about what they have achieved or the progress that they have made over time.
- The standard of work achieved by students in practical sessions across the college is high. Vocational staff have very good industry experience in weaving, glassworks, jewellery, candle making, agriculture and horticulture. Students produce good-quality rugs in weaving sessions and high-quality engraved drinking glasses and vases in the glass workshops. In a glass-blowing workshop, one student produced their first glass jug with a particularly intricate handle, strengthening their fine-motor skills. Students working at the Vale Head Farm demonstrate high levels of care when feeding and handling animals, and they perform 'mucking out' duties independently.
- Specialist staff and support workers are very effective in helping students to become more independent young adults by improving their self-awareness and behaviour. As a result, a third of the students that were in receipt of additional support either receive less support or in a minority of cases now work independently.
- Students' achievement of accredited qualifications is good. The large majority achieve their vocational qualifications, and their functional skills qualifications in information and communications technology, English and mathematics at entry level to level 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 | 81  |
| Principal/CEO   | Bonny Etchell-Anderson (interim principal)                                |
| Website address   | <a href="http://www.rmt.org/glasshouse">http://www.rmt.org/glasshouse</a> |

## 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 |     |
|--|--------------------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|  | 16-18                          | 19+ | 16-18    | 19+ | 16-18   | 19+ | 16-18             | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)                                     | 34                             | 59  | 2        | 3   | 0       | 0   | 0                 | 0   |
|  | Intermediate                   |     | Advanced |     | Higher  |     |                   |     |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age                                    | 16-18                          | 19+ | 16-18    | 19+ | 16-18   | 19+ | 16-18             | 19+ |
|  | 0                              | 0   | 0        | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0                 | 0   |
| Number of traineeships   | 16-19                          |     | 19+      |     | Total   |     |                   |     |
|  | 0                              |     | 0        |     | 0       |     |                   |     |
| Number of learners aged 14–16  | 0                              |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
| Funding received from  | Education Funding Agency (EFA) |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | None                           |     |          |     |         |     |                   |     |

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

|                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Denise Olander, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones          | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Margaret Garai                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Lesley Talbot-Strettle         | Ofsted Inspector        |

The above team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.



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