

Freeman College

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates	22–24 June 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, develop a wide range of personal and employability skills, and are positive about their future.
- Good and enthusiastic leaders and trustees set high standards for staff, are ambitious for their students and have a clear vision for the future of the college.
- The innovative, practical curriculum helps students with significant and complex barriers to learning reduce their levels of anxiety, become more confident and make good progress in managing their behaviour.
- Very good practical resources and facilities across the college's sites support the students' learning experience well and help them develop the skills they need for adult life.
- Staff are passionate about their work; they use their extensive training very effectively to respond to each individual's personal, learning and behavioural needs.
- Excellent community-focused activities provide opportunities for students to make strong contributions to the local community, work alongside highly skilled experts and in social enterprise initiatives.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- In a minority of cases, staff do not use assessment information effectively to monitor progress and set measurable learning goals.
- Speech and language therapy is not fully integrated into the wider curriculum and liaison with parents of new students requires improvement.
- Students who are ready to progress do not have access to supported internships or full-time employment.
- A small number of lesson activities do not fully meet the needs of students.
- Observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not place sufficient emphasis on the progress students make over time, the standards they achieve and the skills they develop.
- Managers do not use the available data effectively to set measurable improvement targets.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Freeman College is an independent specialist college, offering day and residential placements to young people aged 16 to 25 who have complex diagnoses of learning difficulties, disabilities and mental health issues. It is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust, a Rudolf Steiner educational charity. The main college site is situated in the heart of Sheffield. The college also runs the recently refurbished community theatre; a market garden based on the principles of biodynamic farming and located in the suburbs of Sheffield; and a dedicated pewter and copper workshop. It also operates two social enterprises: a city-centre organic café and vegetable box delivery service.
- The majority of its 50 students attend daily. Thirteen are residential students, most of whom live with local families. Most students come from the Sheffield and Rotherham area with the remainder placed by other local authorities.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - identifying the very effective practice that exists in the college and formally sharing successful approaches, methods and techniques with relevant staff
 - making better use of the identification of students' starting points and using this information to record more accurately the progress students make and the skills they develop
 - increasing the emphasis on the impact of teaching on individual learners, the progress they make and the skills they develop when observing teaching, learning and assessment.
- Ensure that all therapists work closely with relevant tutors and learning assistants, so that students benefit from a consistent approach to developing skills, reducing levels of anxiety and preparing them for adult life.
- Ensure that self-assessment arrangements are rigorous and set and monitor clear measurable improvement targets, by:
 - making good use of available data
 - including all staff, relevant external groups, parents and students.
- Develop the work-experience programme by introducing supported internships for students with the potential to progress into employment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders are ambitious for their students and have high expectations of all staff. This is reflected in the good outcomes for many students who progress to further and higher education, voluntary employment and independent or supported living.
- Partnership working with the local community is very strong. The excellent use of the café, gallery and theatre as a learning environment results in the public having very positive relations with the college's community. Strong links with Sheffield City Council, local small metal industries, craft workers, museums, the local hospital and Sheffield's universities enable students to make a strong contribution to the local area.
- The varied and innovative curriculum prepares learners for adult life very effectively; they improve their communication skills, became more motivated and are more positive about the future. Parents identify significant, and in some cases life changing, developments in their son/daughter as a result of attending the college. For example, learners are less anxious in social situations and as a result their families are able to have meals in restaurants, visit friends, or take part in activities without the fear of the young person becoming distressed or behaving inappropriately.
- Staff benefit from good, practical training that improves their practice, helps them develop new skills and keeps them up to date in key areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and how to keep learners safe from extremism and radicalisation.
- Senior managers acknowledge that the most recent self-assessment report was too descriptive, lacked judgements and was not used effectively to develop quality improvement targets. The current self-assessment process uses the views of a wider range of staff, students and other stakeholders effectively to contribute to judgements about the quality of the provision. The recently appointed interim principal's analysis of the strengths and areas for development accurately identify priorities for action and reflect the strategic direction agreed by the trustees.
- The use of data to analyse the effectiveness of the provision and set further improvement targets is good. The recently appointed data manager has a very clear understanding of how better use of data can improve the understanding of where the college is most effective and where improvements are necessary. Reports produced are detailed and have a strong focus on the impact of the work of staff. Staff across the college are becoming more confident in using the management information system to record student targets and track progress. However, a minority of staff do not accurately record the progress made by students, preferring to describe activities undertaken or comment on student behaviour during the session.
- Performance management of staff is generally strong. Managers regularly observe tutors. In the small number of cases where tutors do not meet the expected standard, managers put a good range of formal and informal developmental actions in place and, in the majority of cases, follow up suggested improvements.
- The recording of observations of teaching and learning requires further development. Some records fail to identify clearly the standards achieved by individual students, the progress they make over time and the skills they develop. Too often strengths identified are what is expected for provision for students with high needs.
- College leaders listen to students and take their views seriously. The energetic student council makes recommendations to improve the college. Council members actively promote and reinforce different themes throughout the year, including mental health awareness, equality, diversity and British values.
- College staff have a strong and practical commitment to promoting and reinforcing students' understanding of diversity and equality. Innovative and practical activities develop students' understanding of areas such as mental health difficulties, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights and learning disabilities. Staff evaluate all activities for their impact on students and identified that the majority of students increase their understanding of these issues and the implications for how they treat other people.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Trustees and senior leaders have a clear and coherent strategy to ensure that the provision at Freeman College remains viable and sustainable. The restructure of the college and new trust-wide appointments have reduced costs, improved the flexibility and responsiveness of the provision and, have increased the capacity of the senior leadership team to manage the provision and implement improvement targets.

- Trustees make good use of their experience of implementing change at other Ruskin Mill Trust colleges to develop a cohesive and coherent approach to managing the provision, raising standards and setting improvement targets. The recently developed, trust-wide, executive team has a good overview of the wider trust provision and is starting to hold senior leaders to account through termly meetings, where members of the team present the progress they are making towards achieving agreed key performance measures. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this approach.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Safeguarding practice is effective. Staff identify the more vulnerable learners and those at greater risk promptly and accurately and individual support is continuous and effective. When incidents do occur, staff investigate promptly and take appropriate action. While staff document and record complaints well, in a small minority of cases managers do not monitor or check if relevant individuals take appropriate actions and implement required changes.
- Staff engage other agencies effectively to ensure the protection and safety of students. All staff are recruited and vetted appropriately, and the central register is accurate and up to date.
- Following a serious case review, managers revised the approach to recording and managing risk. As a result, assessments are more comprehensive and include both residential and college-based risks. Staff review safeguarding regularly through a risk rating system and a weekly safeguarding meeting. As a result, staff identify students that are at risk, or that have experienced bullying. Where necessary, staff take appropriate action to ensure that students remain safe.
- Students receive regular information and advice about how to ensure they stay safe online and they understand this well.
- Staff have received appropriate 'Prevent' duty training about the dangers posed by extremism and radicalisation. A thorough action plan is in place but at the time of the inspection, this had not translated into developing student awareness and understanding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Students benefit from a unique, practical curriculum that inspires learning and promotes the industrial traditions and trades associated with Sheffield. Staff are enthusiastic and well qualified with a good range of commercial experience. Students enjoy developing new skills making products in pewter, metalwork and making jewellery and are able to sell these items.
- Staff have high expectations of their students and know them well. Students make good progress in developing their social interaction, self-esteem and confidence. Many are determined individuals with aspirations to progress onto university, further education or to start their own business.
- The development of skills for independent living is good. Students are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and learn key skills that will prepare them for adult life, such as travelling independently to college and to their work placements. They learn how to operate in a professional kitchen and a restaurant. Students feel confident to use the craft skills they have gained as a hobby or even as a way of earning a living.
- Good teaching creates a positive learning environment. Tutors use verbal questioning very effectively to check learners' understanding. Although staff review targets regularly with students, in the less effective cases the language used is insufficiently precise or overly complex to enable the effective monitoring of progress.
- In preparation for work experience, students learn techniques and vocabulary that they will need in the workplace. For example, students can recall how to prepare vegetables and describe a wide range of bread making techniques. Feedback from tutors is timely and provides advice on how students can improve.
- Students improve their English and mathematical skills well as a result of good teaching and effective integration into practical subjects. Catering students, for example, make bread for the organic café and use digital scales to weigh and estimate portions of dough. Students in the market garden use mathematics to plan and complete tasks, with one student taking on significant administration functions to ensure that orders are correct, invoices are accurate and costs reduced. However, tutors occasionally ignore important errors in written work.

- Tutors and therapists work well together to assess students thoroughly at the start of their programme. However, the approach used to identify students' precise starting points is inconsistent between teams. Well-established assessments identify the English and mathematics levels and where a specialist therapy is required; however, the assessment and monitoring of progress in practical skills areas are less clear. College managers recognise that the full implementation of actions to improve assessment and monitoring are at an early stage.
- Resources for learning are very good. Caring and sensitive staff teams support students very effectively. The commercial workshops provide traditional, small-factory settings, students also enjoy running their own extensive market garden run on the principles of biodynamic farming, they help run a gift shop and participate in drama in a fully functioning community theatre.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Students take pride in their life and work at the college. They demonstrate exceptional attitudes to work, good behaviour and respect staff, their peers and appreciate the unique environment in which they are able to learn.
- The development of employability skills is very good. A high proportion of students participate in a wide range of internal work experience opportunities. Students who work in catering start at the staff restaurant and then progress to working in the organic café that is open to the public. Students also work in skills workshops, such as pewter or jewellery, or help run the college gift shop. A small but significant minority goes on to external work experience that matches their long-term employment aspirations well. For example, students interested in an animal care career work at a local educational animal farm. The college recognises that the next step to develop employability is to secure supported internships so that students with the potential to become employed have appropriate opportunities and the right support to prepare them for work.
- Opportunities to engage in social enterprise are good. Students run a vegetable box service from the college market garden. Members of the public and local shops place vegetable orders that students put together. This involves students participating in the complete process from planting seeds to the delivery of vegetables to customers. In addition, students are able to sell products they have made through a carefully managed mini production line of items such as tea-lights, candlesticks and cutlery.
- Students benefit from a relatively new, highly skilled and experienced team of therapists who work effectively with teaching staff to provide individual, intensive therapy to students. This includes movement therapy, massage and speech and language therapy. Therapists have devised a good process of recording precise information at the start of each student's programme and can clearly indicate progress made over time. A newly appointed language therapist is starting to make an impact. However, the work with teaching staff to set precise communication targets and liaise with student homes and schools during the early stages of transition requires further development and integration.
- Students receive effective external careers advice that helps them make realistic decisions about the options available when they leave college. An experienced careers company provides valuable individual support and detailed action plans record discussions held.
- The information and guidance that students receive are good. A competent and highly effective team promotes strong links with parents and professional agencies and, as a result, students in crisis receive particularly good support in their personal lives.
- Staff are caring and sensitive to students' needs and use well-established processes and strategies to support them with behavioural issues or with high levels of anxiety. Consequently, the number of reported instances relating to behaviour continues to decrease. Students learn the importance of safety and hygiene in various aspects of their practical work in kitchens and workshops. Students know how to remain safe when using social media and who to go to if they need support.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Students make good progress as a result of good teaching, an innovative curriculum, and staff who understand their needs very well. Students with significant barriers to success develop good social skills, begin to manage and modify their behaviour and increase their employability. Managers and staff have made a significant improvement to support students at the college, in workshops and in the community. This has resulted in a systematic reduction in the amount and intensity of learning support required by students.
- Progression to further and higher education is good. Of the 17 learners leaving in 2015, around two thirds progressed to further or higher education and two achieved voluntary employment. Of the four learners who did not progress into education, employment or training, three are making good progress towards an appropriate goal.
- Standards of practical work are very high across the college. Many college tutors are experts in their practical skills areas and use their experience to inspire and motivate students. The work produced in some areas is exceptionally good. For example, students work in copper spinning and pewter casting, producing industry standard items, while others produce jewellery that they exhibit and sell commercially. Students working in the biodynamic garden develop excellent vocational skills as well as gain a very good understanding of the growing, cultivating and marketing process, and the importance of caring for the land in a sensitive and sustainable manner.
- Attendance is generally good. Students who arrive at college with very poor records of attendance make significant improvements. Staff have not yet implemented the analysis of attendance data to identify the cause of some irregular attendance at a small minority of classes and the impact that this has on progress and achievement
- The achievement of qualifications is good. The college offers a broad range of qualifications which are selected to meet students' needs and which enable them to progress to the next stage. Qualifications cover land-based studies, communication, personal and social development, and hospitality and catering. A flexible approach enables individuals with particular needs or interests to take a relevant qualification. For example, one student with good mathematical skills was able to take his GCSE in mathematics this year.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	49
Principal/CEO	Dr Perdita Mousley
Website address	www.ruskin-mill.org.uk

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	
	40		8		2		0	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	24	16	4	4	0	2	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA), local authorities and the NHS							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get Sorted 							

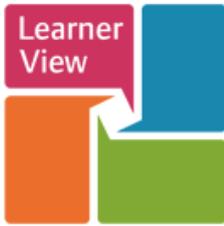
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Nigel Evans, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dr Pam Blackman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Bramley	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the interim 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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