

Blake College LLP

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

10–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness		Inadequate	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate	16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate		
Outcomes for learners	Inadequate		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Leaders and managers have not fulfilled their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty; learners do not know how to keep themselves safe from radical views and violent extremism.
- Curriculum planning is weak. Leaders and managers have not ensured that the full requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme are met, nor have they planned a curriculum with clear pathways to employment, further and higher education.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualification is too low; too few achieve distinction and merit grades or achieve GCSE A* to C grades.
- Leaders, managers and teachers have not ensured that learners develop good skills in English and mathematics or develop good skills for employment.
- Teachers' feedback to learners is insufficient to enable them to see clearly how they may improve their work further.
- Teachers do not ensure that learners make good progress in their studies; they fail to set learners demanding personal and artistic goals for improvement.
- Careers advice and guidance is inadequate to prepare learners well for their next steps in learning and life.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners enjoy their studies and develop a good understanding of how individual life experiences shape art and creative endeavour.
- Teachers are all practising artists and use their vocational knowledge effectively to ensure that learners have a good understanding of professional expectations in the arts industry.
- Leaders, managers, staff and learners work in a harmonious manner and collaborate very well in lessons and around the college.
- Learners develop a good understanding of diversity by exploring the lives and backgrounds of well-known artists through their lessons and within their own work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Blake College is a small, independent and privately owned specialist art and design college. It is situated in Finsbury Park, north London, and is a limited liability partnership. The relatively new principal is assisted by nine part-time teachers, an administrator and a director of studies.
- Most learners are privately funded. In this academic year, Blake College has a contract with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to provide 16 to 19 study programmes for five learners, although managers have currently enrolled 18 learners. All learners, both privately funded and EFA funded, follow advanced-level art and design courses and come from a wide variety of social backgrounds and from different countries and cultures.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders must ensure that they fulfil their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty. As a matter of urgency, they must ensure that all staff and learners understand how to keep themselves safe from those people who advocate radical views and extremism.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that learners receive all aspects of the 16 to 19 study programme. In particular, learners must benefit from:
 - a well-planned curriculum with clear pathways to future learning and employment
 - high -quality mathematics and English teaching, learning and assessment
 - good opportunities to develop the relevant skills for employment
 - good opportunities to learn how to live an independent, healthy life
 - comprehensive careers advice and guidance.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that learners benefit from high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, they must make sure that:
 - teachers understand well each learner's skills and knowledge, both academically and artistically, and ensure that learners are on the correct course to meet their learning needs fully
 - teachers help learners to develop good skills in English and mathematics
 - teachers plan and review learning to meet learners' individual needs
 - teachers' feedback to learners clearly indicates how learners can improve their skills and knowledge and achieve a merit or distinction grade
 - learners make good progress in their studies because teachers set demanding personal and artistic goals, and monitor learners' progress carefully.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection in January 2013, when the provision was judged to be good, standards have declined. The principal of the college is relatively new and has a clear vision to improve the quality of provision. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of many management initiatives aimed at improving the overall learning experience.
- Leaders' and managers' approach to ensuring that learners improve further their skills in English and mathematics is inadequate. For example, they do not make sure that teachers assess learners' English and mathematics skills when they start their programme, or check that teachers plan subsequent learning to help learners improve. Managers do not plan for those learners who need to gain a GCSE at grade A* to C to do so.
- Leaders and managers do not make sure that learners develop good skills for employment or are prepared well enough for work. Managers have not planned appropriate work experience or sufficient employment-related activities that would enable learners to understand the expectations of employers.
- Curriculum planning is weak. Leaders and managers have not ensured that the full requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme have been met, or planned a curriculum with clear pathways to employment, further training and/or higher education. In addition, they have not collaborated with employers and business leaders to identify what skills and qualifications employers require. Managers accept that they do not yet have comprehensive data on those learners who progress to employment, so that they can refine further the courses Blake College offers.
- Careers advice and guidance are inadequate. Managers and teachers do not prepare learners well for their next steps in learning and life. Learners seldom have the opportunity to plan and review formally their potential career options, and advice from teachers is insufficient to enable learners to make good choices in their career.
- Quality assurance arrangements are weak and lack sufficient impact. Managers' own self-assessment of performance and the quality of the learning experience is not accurate or realistic. Quality improvement focuses too much on business planning and not enough on improving teaching, learning and assessment or improving learners' achievement. Managers do not evaluate fully or recognise sufficiently the impact that teaching, learning and assessment have on learners' achievement of their qualifications. Managers have been slow to implement most of the recommendations from the previous inspection.
- Managers respond well to the comments that learners make for improvements to learning. For example, the principal has refurbished the information and communications facilities and introduced faster internet access to improve learners' opportunities to research their assignment work. Learners appreciate the opportunities they have to express their views and they enjoy their learning at Blake College.

The governance of the provider

- No governance arrangements are in place to help and guide senior leaders in their work or to improve the standard of learning. The new principal recognises the need to introduce a supervisory group and to work with employers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective because leaders and managers have failed to implement their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty. Too few staff and learners understand how to keep themselves and each other safe from those who promote radical views and/or advocate violent extremism. Too few staff have undertaken appropriate training and, to date, no learner has received any form of training or information that would enable them to know the potential dangers that they may face.
- Learners and staff feel safe at Blake College. Managers ensure that appropriate checks are undertaken when employing staff and safe recruiting practices are observed. Managers' risk assess effectively all aspects of learners' work, both at college and during the trips and visits that learners undertake. Learners know how to work safely when in class, when working online and when using social media.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not set work that is demanding enough to enable learners to make good progress in their studies. Teachers' planning of learning does not take account of learners' starting points sufficiently or meet the individual abilities of their learners. In too many lessons, learners all work on the same tasks and activities, regardless of their level of prior skills and knowledge.
- Teachers' development of learners' skills and knowledge in English and mathematics is not yet good. For instance, teachers do not focus sharply on learners developing good technical language, and learners' work often contains spelling and grammatical errors. Not all teachers help learners to identify where mathematics is used in everyday life or within the creative media industry.
- Teachers' monitoring of learners' progress is insufficient and they do not set learners demanding personal and artistic goals. Learners are not always aware of the skills they should develop, and in practical lessons teachers do not challenge learners to aim for and achieve work of a higher standard. The majority of learning activities which teachers plan do not allow learners to demonstrate the skills required to achieve high grades.
- At the time of inspection, early in the academic year, the skills learners were already developing varied too much from good to weak. For example, learners are not always able to review their own and others' work, or justify their own views sufficiently well. Teachers are often content to accept homework that is incomplete and do not focus learners sufficiently on practising and extending their skills outside of lessons.
- At the previous inspection, teachers did not provide good feedback to learners on the standard and quality of their work. This remains the case. In lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient feedback to learners on their work, they are often overly positive and do not help learners to understand how they could improve further. Teachers' written feedback is often scant.
- Staff and teachers are friendly and positive; learners value their teachers' encouraging approach and the small class sizes that result in close individual attention. Teachers use frequent visits and trips to art galleries and museums through which learners gain first-hand knowledge of well-known paintings and artefacts from a broad range of artistic

disciplines. Learners develop a good understanding of how individual life experiences shape art and creative endeavour.

- Learners gain an effective understanding of the professional expectations of their chosen subject because teachers are all vocationally well qualified and practising artists in their own discipline. Teachers ensure that the skills learners develop are relevant and up to date.
- Teachers ensure that learners develop a good understanding of the diverse society in which learners live and work. Teachers use the work of renowned artists very effectively to illustrate and articulate social expectations and cultural differences. For example, a teacher used the work of Njideka Akunyili-Crosby to discuss cultural identity and artistic idioms.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- Staff have not provided training to learners in line with their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, learners do not have a good enough understanding of the dangers faced by those who promote violent extremism and are insufficiently aware of how to keep themselves safe from such influences.
- Teachers plan too few additional activities to enliven and enrich learning. For example, they do not provide sufficient opportunity for learners to become independent learners through developing their wider research skills. Too often learners do not complete independent study asked of them, such as homework tasks.
- Teachers do not help learners to develop skills they need for future jobs and those on study programmes do not have work experience. Staff do not assess learners' interests and aspirations well enough at the start of the course to ensure that they develop the skills or experience to meet these. Toward the end of the course, staff do not provide adequate guidance to help learners into employment or further study.
- Tutorials are infrequent and teachers do not provide learners with targets so that they can monitor their progress or know how to improve it. As a result, too few learners achieve high grades.
- Teachers do not plan sufficiently for the development of learners' personal welfare and development. For example, they do not provide good information on topics such as personal budgeting, sexual health or living a healthy lifestyle. Learners do benefit from termly art therapy sessions to help them explore their mental health and well-being.
- Learners develop effective skills in presenting and displaying their work by exhibiting in a local gallery for their end of course show. They benefit from talks and presentations from alumni, who share their knowledge of living and working within the creative industries. Learners attend well, although their punctuality is poor, and speak very positively about how their personal confidence and self-esteem have improved as a result of studying at Blake College.
- Learners' behaviour in college is good and they collaborate in lessons very well. They respect and value one another, their teachers and the environment in which they study. Learners from a broad range of diverse backgrounds and communities learn together harmoniously and benefit from the effective opportunities teachers provide to learn about living in modern Britain.

- Learners feel safe within the college site and know to whom they should take any concerns they may have. Learners are confident that teachers and staff would deal well with inappropriate incidents, such as bullying.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- The proportion of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes who complete their qualification is too low. Leaders and managers have not ensured that learners achieve at the same high level as was previously the case; the proportion of learners achieving a distinction or merit grade in the vocational aspect of their qualification is too low.
- Learners do not develop good skills in English and mathematics. Current learners are making poor progress towards improving their skills in English and/or mathematics.
- Teachers do not prepare learners well for their next stages in education, training or employment. Too few learners move onto a higher level of qualification during their time at Blake College and too few progress to university. Managers do not always know how many learners move into employment or further training on completing their studies.
- Learners enjoy their studies and gain new skills in a broad range of subjects, from fine art and graphic design to photography. For example, in a textile design lesson, learners developed further their skills of observation by sketching street signs to use in their own textile designs and drawings.
- Leaders, managers, teachers and staff provide a welcoming and caring environment in which to learn. Those learners from troubled backgrounds settle into their learning quickly.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50743
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5
Principal/CEO	Ruth Brooks
Telephone number	02072 723165
Website	www.blake.ac.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	–	–	–	5	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	–	–	–	–	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of studies, 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 learners 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.

Inspection team

Jules Steele, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ray Walker

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016