

John Ruskin College

Sixth form college

Inspection dates

3–6 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and governors have been slow to address the decline in standards since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of learners who complete their courses and achieve qualifications is too low on many courses, particularly for learners on the level 3 study programme and for those taking English and mathematics GCSEs.
- Teachers do not take sufficient account of the full range of learners' abilities in lessons. As a result, a minority of learners make slow progress.
- The pace of lessons is often too slow, particularly in theory lessons, and teachers fail to engage and motivate learners fully.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient detail in their feedback to learners to enable learners to identify how to improve the quality of their work.
- Assessors do not visit apprentices regularly enough and, as a result, apprentices take too long to complete their qualification.
- Managers do not track the rate of progress of apprentices accurately, particularly those managed through subcontracted provision.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills and undertake valuable work experience, which gives them the confidence they need to progress towards the world of work.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance that help them progress to the next stage of their education or training, or into employment.
- Leaders and managers have designed a curriculum that helps address local economic and developmental priorities well, and responds to the requirements of local employers.
- Managers place a strong emphasis on identifying and supporting the more vulnerable members of the college community, including care leavers, children looked after and those in receipt of hardship funding.
- Leaders and managers have a broad range of strategies in place to help support the welfare of staff and learners.

Full report

Information about the provider

- John Ruskin College is a small sixth form college situated in the London Borough of Croydon on the Surrey and Kent borders. The college offers predominantly vocational programmes, traineeships and apprenticeships. Most of the relatively small number of adult learners enrolled at the college study alongside those learners on the 16 to 19 study programme. At the time of the inspection, there were no trainees on programmes at the college.
- Although the college is located in the more affluent South Croydon, most of the college's learners use public transport to travel to the college from other parts of the borough and beyond. Learners join the college with GCSE results which are, on average, significantly lower than is typical in a sixth form. Around three quarters of learners are from minority ethnic heritage. The college has a particularly high proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those on free school meals, care leavers living independently and children looked after.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the urgency with which leaders, managers and governors implement strategies to help raise the quality of provision.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and raise achievement rates by:
 - teaching lessons that engage and motivate learners more
 - ensuring that lessons address the diverse needs of all members of the group
 - providing detailed feedback to learners so that they know how to improve the quality of their work
 - ensuring that learners maintain notes and handouts provided by teachers, so that they have a suitable record from which to revise and prepare for assessments.
- Continue to focus on those strategies that have helped raise achievement rates in some English and mathematics qualifications, in particular ensuring consistency of staffing, careful planning and accurate analysis of the most appropriate programme to meet the needs of each learner.
- Ensure that apprentices get sufficiently frequent visits from assessors so that they receive the support they need to complete their apprenticeships within the stipulated time frame.
- Fully implement the online progress tracking of apprentices so that managers can monitor more accurately the progress of each apprentice across all the provision and, in particular, those managed through subcontractors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the college was previously inspected in 2013, the overall quality of provision at the college has declined. In particular, outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management have declined and now require improvement.
- As the apprenticeship programme has expanded, leaders and managers have placed insufficient emphasis on ensuring that they can monitor the progress of all apprentices managed by subcontractors. This has led to too much variation in the quality of subcontracted provision, and failed to identify sufficiently accurately those apprentices who are making slower progress towards achieving their qualification.
- After a period of change relating to the management and teaching of English and mathematics, which resulted in poor learner performance, leaders have put in place a new strategy and appointed new staff to help raise standards in this area. These changes are starting to have a positive impact on raising achievement in some functional skills qualifications. However, the area continues to require further improvement to ensure that more learners successfully achieve the appropriate English and mathematics qualifications, particularly in GCSEs, and develop their literacy and numeracy skills to a suitable level.
- The leadership team has introduced a number of improvement initiatives, particularly over the past year. These include an increased emphasis on the role of learning coaches, more analytical lesson observations and learning walks to identify areas for improvement, and a rolling programme of staff development and training. Managers have also reviewed and updated the appraisal system to help ensure that staff are clearer about their goals, and the expectations that managers have of their performance. There are early indications that these initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards. However, a number of areas require further sustained improvement to achieve a consistently good standard of provision across the college.
- Managers have designed a suitable curriculum that helps address local priorities and creates high-quality work experience and progression opportunities for learners. Some of the most significant changes include a substantial growth in the apprenticeship programme, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, catering, security services and pharmacy dispensing.
- All staff place a high priority on the importance of valuing people, regardless of their differences, and promoting learners' understanding of British values. This helps to create a harmonious college community, reflecting and celebrating the rich cultural diversity of the learner and staff population. Learners and staff treat one another with tolerance and respect.
- Managers place a strong emphasis on identifying and supporting the more vulnerable members of the college community, for example care leavers, children looked after and those in receipt of hardship funding. These learners receive very good support and guidance, and the significant majority of these learners make good progress and achieve their goals.

- Leaders and managers have a broad range of strategies in place to help support the welfare of staff and learners. For example, they have good access to counselling services to tackle any mental health concerns they may have. Managers have also developed a beneficial programme to help raise awareness for learners at risk of domestic violence, and to provide access to support and guidance where required.

The governance of the provider

- Governors set the strategic priorities of the college effectively and ensure that they address the needs of the local community. In particular, they help create the opportunity for the most disadvantaged groups of learners in the community to make good progress. Governors have been slow to hold leaders to account for raising standards. Governors are stringent in the financial management of the provider and challenge leaders effectively on financial matters.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and managers work in close collaboration to ensure that the safety of staff and learners is paramount. Staff make learners aware of potential risks in the local community associated with gang culture and knife crime. Staff work closely with representatives from the local authority, the police and gang units to raise learners' awareness of these themes. The designated safeguarding lead and staff work with external organisations, for example to raise any concerns they may have about learners whom they feel might be at risk of radicalisation. Most learners are aware of the 'Prevent' duty and know whom to contact should they have any concerns.
- Managers ensure that staff checks are thorough prior to recruitment. All staff undertake safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Learners say they feel safe and know whom to approach at the college should they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- In a minority of theory lessons, the pace of activities is slow and the lessons are not challenging enough for most-able learners. These learners tend to lose concentration, disengage from the activities and discussions, and, as a result, their progress is comparatively slow.
- Teachers do not provide enough clarity or detail to learners on how they can improve and achieve higher grades. In particular, teachers' written feedback does not identify for learners how they can improve their literacy skills, such as spelling and punctuation. While assessors often provide detailed verbal feedback to apprentices, they do not consistently record the suggested actions in sufficient detail to enable the apprentices to reflect on how they can improve their knowledge and skills in the future.
- The design of a minority of lessons is weak. Occasionally the activities are too simple and not representative of the level of study. In a few lessons, particularly for learners in the second year of a level 3 course, not enough learners can remember important facts from previous lessons. When questioned by teachers about prior learning, too often learners are vague, and their notes and handouts from previous lessons are often disorganised. As

a result, not all learners have the resources they require to revise and consolidate prior learning.

- In most lessons, learners and apprentices understand what teachers expect of them and know the deadlines for completion and submission of work. They are also aware of what grade they are working towards. They are able to explain what progress they are making and the skills they are developing. Learners are able to make good links between what they are learning at college and how to apply it within work placements.
- Teachers and assessors have good vocational and subject knowledge. They use their skills well to support and enable learners to develop their practical skills. Teachers encourage learners to use suitable subject-specific terminology. For example, in a hairdressing lesson, learners were confidently using complex terminology such as 'dermis', 'elasticity' and 'porosity' in their discussions and note-taking.
- Teachers know their learners well. They are aware of, and sympathetic to, any particular needs or vulnerabilities of individual members of the group. Teachers are good at identifying learners' particular additional support needs. Learning support assistants make a positive contribution in lessons. They use their time and expertise skilfully, and enable learners in receipt of the additional support to integrate well into the lesson activities and make good progress.
- Teachers frequently encourage learners to provide verbal feedback on each other's work in lessons. Learners are familiar with this approach. They are confident and respectful when evaluating the work of other learners, and provide constructive and beneficial feedback. Teachers then provide relevant additional feedback, and regularly make reference to course assessment criteria to enable learners to appreciate the quality of their work and the progress they are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners' and apprentices' general behaviour around college and in the workplace is good. They are respectful and courteous to their peers, staff and visitors.
- The development of learners' personal, social and employability skills is a particular strength at the college. Leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on providing learners with the skills they require to progress towards the world of work. Apprentices develop a high level of confidence in the workplace and add value to their employers' businesses.
- Managers and staff maintain strong and beneficial links with local employers. They make good use of these to enable learners on study programmes to take part in valuable work experience opportunities and work-related activities as part of their programmes. Learners recognise and appreciate the benefits that such opportunities provide.
- Staff arrange a valuable 'skills week' for learners on study programmes. This provides learners with the opportunity to reflect carefully on their career options and to consider how they can develop the knowledge and skills they require to progress. Learners also gain additional input on topics such as how to write good job applications, job search and interview preparation.
- Learners on level 3 courses receive good support and guidance to assist them in applying to university. Over the past three years, the proportion of learners who have successfully

progressed to university has increased and is high.

- Learners on study programmes take part in a thorough tutorial programme. Learners acquire valuable knowledge and understanding in a broad range of topics including British values, citizenship, equality and diversity, and the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. All learners and apprentices feel safe around the college, and know what action to take if they experience any concerns. They also know how to keep themselves safe at college, in the community and online.
- Learners are particularly aware of the benefits they gain from the rich cultural diversity of learners across the college community. Staff create good opportunities to promote learners' appreciation of different cultures. For example, the college recently ran an Albanian day to raise awareness among learners of the cultural characteristics and political issues that the country faces.
- Learners contribute well to the running of the college through the elected student partnership council and learner ambassadors. Learners play a positive role in the selection and recruitment of staff at the college. In addition, staff make good use of learner ambassadors to provide information to college visitors and prospective learners, for example at interviews and open evenings. Leaders regularly gather the views of learners on their perceptions of the college, and use these to influence ongoing planning.
- During the previous academic year, attendance declined significantly over the course of the year and by the summer term it was low. Managers have put in place a range of strategies to improve attendance and have reinforced the importance of high attendance to learners. At the time of inspection, early in the academic year, attendance rates were generally high, but it was too early to judge the longer-term impact of these new initiatives.
- While learners and apprentices generally develop their literacy, numeracy, communication, and information and communication technology skills adequately, they do not all succeed in achieving the desired qualifications in English and mathematics.
- For learners on study programmes, staff do not place sufficient focus on the development of learners' study skills. For example, in a minority of lessons, learners did not take notes, despite requests from teachers to do so. On occasions, learners' folders were disorganised.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of learners on study programmes who successfully achieve their qualifications is too low. In particular, the number of learners at level 3 who complete and successfully achieve their qualification has declined over the past two years. As a result of managers' concerted improvement initiatives over the past year, there has been a modest increase in the proportion of learners who have achieved their qualification at entry level and level 1.
- The weaker-performing areas, where achievement rates generally remain too low, include health and social care, childcare, science and mathematics, and business administration and management. The areas where learners' achievement is generally better include hairdressing and beauty therapy, sport, arts and media.
- In 2017, learners' success in achieving qualifications in English and mathematics varied

significantly. A high proportion of learners have achieved well in functional skills English at levels 1 and 2, and functional skills mathematics at entry level and level 1. However, too few learners successfully achieved their functional skills mathematics at level 2. The proportion of learners who achieved high grades in GCSE English was particularly low.

- The number of apprentices who successfully achieve their qualifications is high. However, too many apprentices, particularly at intermediate level, take longer than necessary to complete the programme.
- On both apprenticeships and study programmes, female learners do not achieve as well as male learners.
- Managers carefully track the progress and performance of more disadvantaged learners, in particular children looked after, care leavers and those in receipt of additional financial support at college. Staff provide additional support for these learners and, as a result, they make good progress and most successfully complete their course.
- The significant majority of learners successfully progress to the next stage of learning. For example, a high proportion of learners who successfully complete their level 3 programme gain places at university. Similarly, the majority of those learners who study at lower levels progress to further study, both at John Ruskin College and at neighbouring colleges. For those learners on apprenticeships, a high proportion gain promotion or additional responsibilities, or progress on to a higher-level apprenticeship programme.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college has around 700 learners on study programmes, spanning courses from entry level to level 3. The largest curriculum areas include childcare, health and social care, sport, art and design, media, science, business and English for speakers of other languages. Around half the learners on study programmes are studying at level 3, with just over a quarter at level 2 and the rest at entry level or level 1.
- In the previous academic year, too many learners did not complete their study programme. Attendance in lessons declined significantly over the course of the year and was too low. As a result, not enough learners achieved their qualifications. Managers have established clear goals and expectations for staff, and have introduced new strategies in an attempt to retain more learners on the study programme and raise attendance. At the time of inspection, it was too early to judge the impact of this new approach.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not design tasks that meet the varied needs and abilities of all the learners in the group. For example, on occasions, teachers focus too much attention on those learners who are making slower progress, and do not create enough opportunities to challenge and encourage the most-able learners in the group.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers tend to rush activities, particularly in the latter part of the lesson. They do not create opportunities to check learners' understanding or to consolidate their learning.
- In too many lessons, learners arrive late for lessons. This results in minor disruption to the first part of the lesson and interrupts the progress of others in the group. Managers have recently introduced a new strategy for dealing with lateness. Learners recognise this

is now a higher priority, and indicate that it is starting to have a positive impact on improving punctuality and reducing interruptions to lessons.

- Managers ensure that courses meet the principles of the 16 to 19 study programme. A comprehensive tutorial programme enables learners to develop their knowledge, for example of British values, equality and diversity. Learners undertake meaningful work experience which helps to enhance their employability skills. They also access a range of suitable enrichment opportunities, such as activities to celebrate various cultural and religious festivals, citizenship week, internal elections, careers and higher education fairs, and visits to historic sites. This helps them to develop their personal, social and employability skills well, and supports them in preparing for their next stage to further learning or employment.
- Teachers and specialist careers staff provide particularly good advice and guidance to learners to enable them to progress to the next stage of their education or training. Of those learners who complete and achieve their qualifications, a high proportion progress to the next stage of learning.
- Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe and how to report concerns they may have, in particular associated with radicalisation or extremism.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college has around 640 learners on apprenticeship frameworks. There has been a substantial growth in the number of apprentices over the past two years, with the significant majority of apprenticeships delivered via subcontracting arrangements. While most apprentices are in the Greater London area, others are located across England. Most apprentices follow programmes in professional cookery, hospitality, health and social care, and customer service.
- While a high proportion of apprentices successfully achieve their qualification, too few achieve within the stipulated time frame. In particular, too many apprentices are slow to complete their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications.
- Managers do not track apprentices' progress well enough, particularly across the network of subcontractors. As a result, managers do not have a sufficient overview of those apprentices at risk of exceeding the time frame for their programme. Managers have started to introduce new systems, designed to enable them to track apprentices' progress more accurately. However, at the time of the inspection, they still could not identify accurately those apprentices whose progress was too slow.
- Managers have had difficulty recruiting staff and assessors in certain areas. While most apprentices receive frequent visits, for a small minority of apprentices, visits are too infrequent.
- Assessors tend to set targets for apprentices that focus too much on what evidence they should gather, rather than on how they should develop their knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to improve and develop.
- The majority of apprentices produce high standards of work and develop good employment and personal skills. They contribute well to the employers' businesses. For example, an apprentice with experience of preparing Italian food has widened his skills to

offer traditional English pastries and desserts. Apprentices make quick and sustained progress in their personal and social skills. They have good opportunities in the workplace to develop skills such as customer service, team working and supervisory management.

- Assessors work closely with employers. They ensure that employers are involved in reviews and evaluation of apprentices' performance, as well as consulting them on setting suitable targets for the apprentices.
- Assessors have relevant industry experience. They assess apprentices' work at the appropriate level, and ensure that it meets industry and commercial standards. They also ensure that apprentices learn about, and pay suitable attention to, health and safety where necessary.
- Managers design apprenticeship programmes appropriately to meet skills shortages and address local skills development needs. For example, a group of catering apprentices are developing skills in Asian cookery to help address local demand.
- On completion of their apprenticeship programmes, a high proportion of apprentices gain promotion at work or additional responsibilities. For example, an administrator gained promotion to become personal assistant to a senior manager, and a sous chef successfully took on the role of head chef in a restaurant.
- Apprentices are well aware of how to stay safe at work and online. Assessors promote apprentices' understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and British values well, for example through the implementation of a citizenship programme. Apprentices have valuable opportunities to complete additional qualifications relevant to their programme, such as food hygiene or marketing for small businesses.
- Managers have effective due diligence and sound financial procedures in place to help monitor the performance of subcontractors. They make sure that both direct delivery and subcontracted programmes meet the principles and requirements of the apprenticeship framework. In a few instances, employers do not provide sufficient time for apprentices to complete work for their framework during working hours.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130434
Type of provider	Sixth form college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,849
Principal/CEO	Mohammed Ramzan
Telephone number	020 8651 1131
Website	www.johnruskin.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	147	15	181	15	314	28		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	132	302	11	164	0	48		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	26							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	2							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Astro Martin Croydon School of Accountancy and Management Millennium Academy Ltd.							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice 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 and telephone calls 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

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Lyn Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca Perry	Ofsted Inspector
Linnia Khemdoudi	Ofsted Inspector

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