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Ms Gráinne O'Reilly
Principal
Ruskin Mill College
The Fisheries
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Dear Ms O'Reilly

Short inspection of Ruskin Mill College

Following the short inspection on 18 and 19 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in May 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

Your effective leadership and management continues to provide a good educational experience for students. The nurturing and respectful environment at the college helps students successfully overcome many of the significant barriers and challenges they face. Trustees and senior Ruskin Mill Trust leaders provide you and other college leaders with good, practical support by encouraging new ways of working and ensuring that effective practices from other colleges within the trust are shared.

Your staff now make good use of the information included in education, health and care (EHC) plans. Education or admissions staff adapt and develop goals when outcomes in EHC plans are out of date or not relevant to the changing needs of students. This ensures that more students progress well towards their adult life.

You and your leadership team have made good progress in addressing the areas for development identified at the previous inspection. In particular, staff and students use information and communication technology (ICT) well to support learning. The increased wi-fi coverage ensures that teaching staff working in the more remote parts of the college site can access ICT resources when necessary.

You and senior leaders recognise that the current self-assessment report does not reflect the college's current strengths and areas for improvement. You acknowledge that the quality improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on actions to improve the experience of students. Effective plans are in place to revise the self-assessment

arrangements and quality improvement planning.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of care exists at Ruskin Mill college, where staff know students' needs and are adept at tailoring support for individuals. As a result, students feel safe and know that they need to speak to a member of staff if they have any concerns.

Staff are very conscious of health and safety and ensure that students adhere to the relevant requirements. Students are aware of what personal protective equipment is required and know that if they do not have the correct equipment they will not be allowed to take part in the activity. Teaching and learning staff take care to integrate the development of health and safety understanding for students into all practical sessions.

The safeguarding team deals with disclosures appropriately and make effective use of external agencies. For the vast majority of incidents, safeguarding records are well organised and of high quality. In a very small minority of cases information about incidents or concerns is not recorded in the agreed format.

Staff and managers are well trained and experienced in dealing with day-to-day concerns and safeguarding incidents. Many have a good understanding of how the Mental Capacity Act 2005 affects relevant students and the implications for students subject to Deprivation of Liberty safeguards. A high proportion of staff are also trained in first aid. Many are trained beyond the basic level and over 30 staff are trained to use the three defibrillators on site, demonstrating leaders' commitment to safeguarding students. In a minority of areas, staff lack up-to-date knowledge of more complex safeguarding topics, such as peer-on-peer abuse or 'county lines', where gangs use vulnerable young people to facilitate the sale of drugs. Some current training does not give staff the information they need to feel confident enough in dealing with these topics.

College managers have an appropriate awareness of their duties under the 'Prevent' duty; however, the training and awareness-raising of these issues for staff are underdeveloped. All staff recognise the need to actively promote fundamental British values; however, the majority of students do not make the connection between these values and their lives at college.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we explored several key lines of enquiry together. We examined how well the previous good quality of provision was being maintained. We also explored the quality of target-setting and learners' progress in English and mathematics. In addition, we examined the quality of work experience and careers advice and guidance in helping learners make effective choices about their futures. Finally we investigated the effectiveness of communication between the college and parents and carers.
- Trustees remain very active in monitoring and supporting the work of the college.

They provide a suitable level of challenge to senior leaders. Recent appointments bring a very good range of experience and expertise to further strengthen the work of the college. For example, one new trustee has a strong background in care and post-16 special educational needs and another is a local headteacher, who is a safeguarding lead, a member of a local safeguarding board and has trained staff regarding criminal exploitation.

- The admissions process now has a stronger focus on identifying the needs and potential barriers of students before they enrol. This enables the college to put the right resources and expertise in place before students start. Senior managers now consider the overall characteristics of the student population so that particular disabilities or emotional and behavioural support needs do not dominate the college.
- The collection of data relating to destinations is good and the information is used to further improve provision. For example, the team supporting students in their final year was reorganised and the curriculum adapted so that students are better prepared for their next stage in life. Students progress to appropriate destinations; in 2016/17 a high proportion of students progressed on to other further education provision.
- The use of data to set college-wide improvement targets or measure the success of activities requires further development. For example, the action to improve students' attendance and punctuality lacks clarity and its intended impact on students is difficult to measure.
- The majority of students develop good work-related skills as they progress through college. Internal work placements are effective in preparing students for external work experiences. Staff responsible for external work experience plan and support placements well; they provide employers with a very useful pack that includes comprehensive information on students before placements start. Students visit placements and their expectations and those of the employer are discussed, helping to make the placement successful for both parties.
- Staff do not record students' gains in skills on external work placements sufficiently; this slows down the progress students make. Some students do not understand the requirements of their work placement sufficiently. The work experience tracking sheets do not help students identify areas for development or support them to achieve the highest possible standards.
- Students develop an appropriate work ethic; for example, understanding the importance of punctuality and the need to contact an employer if delayed for work. As they become more confident and competent in their roles, students spend more time at their work experience.
- The recently appointed pathway coordinators have good plans to prepare students for their next stage and are already working well with students in their final year. The qualifications and skills each student needs in order to succeed when they leave college are clearly laid out in individual learning plans. This ensures that clear links are made between activities, experiences and students' intended destinations or aspirations. Students feel well supported as they prepare to leave college and the anxieties they may have about their next stage are

acknowledged and managed sensitively.

- Teachers and other learning staff integrate careers education well into relevant learning activities. Teaching and support staff make reference to related careers during practical sessions. However, some staff do not record the discussions or actions agreed about careers and other next steps. The principal recognises the need to broaden the information, advice and guidance (IAG) given to students and formally record the IAG activities for each individual.
- Relevant staff ensure that parents and carers receive good communication throughout the admissions process. When students start at college, staff and parents work well together to ensure that students' anxiety levels are reduced and any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Residential managers contact parents at least weekly. Staff liaise with appropriate professionals for care leavers and children who are looked after.
- At the previous inspection the use of ICT to support learning was an area for development. All subject areas now have access to desktop or tablet computers. Students develop good ICT skills; for example, they produce pictures for their journals that provide a visual and written record of activities they have completed and informative posters about keeping safe online.
- The high-quality newsletter, written and developed by students, contains articles on conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; it demonstrates well the awareness and understanding the students have of each other's conditions and how they affect behaviour and personal relationships.
- The quality and standard of craft items students produce and the levels of care they take with the livestock and fish at the college remain high. Students are proud of their practical work and show great pleasure in explaining how items are made or how they care for the animals.
- Teachers integrate English and maths skills well into practical sessions. Relevant practical skills such as weighing, measuring, reading and following instructions are reinforced very effectively by most subject tutors. Students understand how functional skills help them make progress with their everyday lives.
- Students benefit from the recent appointment of a speech and language therapist. The speech and language therapist and functional skills tutors work well together to help students develop effective communication skills. Students with very poor expressive language make good progress with their communication and social interaction by using symbol-based communication aids.
- The standard of behaviour across the college site is good. Staff support students with challenging behaviour skilfully. They calm and diffuse aggressive outbursts and help students manage difficult or stressful situations.
- In a small minority of cases, learning outcomes do not relate to learners' specific needs. In such circumstances learning plans do not specify how and what different learners will achieve or help them progress towards their long-term individual goals. Very occasionally, all students have the same learning target.
- The quality of learning support is good; the majority of learning support staff

work very effectively and sensitively with students. In a small minority of cases teachers do not deploy learning support assistants effectively.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training materials are up to date and relevant to the wide-ranging needs of students
- self-assessment arrangements reflect the impact of the work of the college on the lives of the students and the quality improvement plan makes good use of the available data and other information to provide appropriate, measurable targets to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the college
- the arrangements for students taking part in external work placements ensure they understand their expected roles and functions, record the skills they develop and demonstrate the progress they make
- where appropriate, students have a careers action plan that records their ambitions and aspirations as well as the actions, support and resources required to achieve their long-term goals.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website

Yours sincerely

Nigel Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector visited the college for two days. We carried out inspection activities across the college site. The interim principal assisted inspectors. We met with you, the chief executives, trustees, managers, and a range of teachers, learning assistants and students. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, work placements, and scrutinised learners' files and other key documents.