

Inspection of Glasshouse College

Inspection dates:

12–14 October 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this 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 heritage glassmaking site in Stourbridge; the second site, Argent College, is situated in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham. The college currently runs provision for 77 students from a wide geographical area. At the time of inspection 26 learners are aged 16 to 18, with 51 aged 19 to 25. The residential settings managed by the college are inspected by CQC and therefore were not in scope for this inspection.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students benefit from working in industry-related practical workshops. They quickly develop an understanding of how to work with materials and equipment associated with different crafts. Staff support students to make craft items and learn from their mistakes in a safe environment. Most students quickly improve their confidence and take pride in their work.

Most students develop a broad knowledge and experience of heritage craft. Students achieve helpful qualifications during their programme. They use their experiences to plan future employment opportunities in their chosen subjects.

Students benefit from working in a calm environment. The tactile and therapeutic experience of working within craft industries enables students to improve their health and well-being. As a result, there is a reduction of incidents of behaviour issues over time.

During their time at college students work with staff to develop a comprehensive understanding of their disabilities. Through working with highly qualified tutors and specialist support staff, students develop the strategies they need to cope with difficult situations. As a result, most students are successful at college.

Students benefit from developing their understanding of healthy eating to improve their health and well-being. Through the work staff undertake with students through the 'seed-to-table' sessions, students often seek to change their eating habits, making informed health choices with regard to food. Students often see an improvement in their well-being, mood and energy levels.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders, trustees and staff have developed an innovative and effective curriculum, which focuses on local heritage craft industries. Leaders have designed the curriculum to equip students with the skills they need to work in sectors such as glass blowing, jewellery making, leatherwork, biodynamic horticulture, farming, hospitality, and woodland management. As a result, most students make craft work to a high standard.

Following the previous inspection, trustees took steps to stabilise the senior leadership team. They have appointed a college principal, who has responsibility for both Glasshouse and Argent colleges. Following a review of staffing structures and support for students, the college leaders appointed education, health and care managers (EHCMs). EHCMs work closely with students and parents. They monitor the progress of students against the education, health and care planned outcomes. These appointments have led to improvement in leaders' oversight of students' progress.

Senior leaders, tutors and support teams have developed the curriculum to provide individualised education and training for students. Staff work closely with students who have previously struggled to access educational settings. Leaders ensure that staff have the necessary training to understand students' individual starting points. As a result, most students improve their confidence, become more independent and learn to self-manage their behaviours during their time at college.

Tutors are highly skilled experts within their subjects. In practical craft subjects, tutors use their subject knowledge to improve students' skills over time. For example, tutors and students work as a team in the bronze-casting workshop. Tutors assess students' ability to pour molten bronze into moulds. Through feedback from the tutor, students understand the need to have the crucible higher to enable them to pour more quickly to secure casting to a high standard.

During their time at college most students develop a strong work ethic. Staff teach students about the risks associated with taking part in practical subjects such as glass blowing. Most students demonstrate an extensive understanding of the risks when working with fire and hot glass. They carefully follow instructions, select the correct protective equipment for the job they are undertaking and work safely in practical workshops.

Tutors ensure students take relevant external qualifications. They support most students to complete English and mathematics qualifications relevant to their starting points. Tutors in GCSE English plan the curriculum to improve students' written work. As a result, students often produce well-planned and creative written work. These students have achieved the required level of English, and they understand how this will help them in their future careers. However, a few students do not understand why they are taking these qualifications and become disengaged from their studies.

Tutors effectively identify the starting points of students within functional skills sessions. Tutors in mathematics use this information to plan their teaching well to improve students' skills in this subject quickly. For example, students with limited mathematics skills at the start of their programme are now able to complete 'big maths' work independently, and without the use of calculators. Students are developing significant new skills and knowledge as a result of their programme.

Tutors and support teams support most students well during their time at college. Staff identify the starting points for students' support needs, including the requirements for therapy services. Staff work with students to plan and put in place strategies for the management of their behaviour. Most students learn to self-manage their behaviour; the number of behaviour incidents reduces alongside the levels of support for students during their time at college.

Therapy staff work well with students to create a calm and collaborative relationship. Staff carefully explain their expectations and plans with students. They plan therapy services, such as speech and language therapy, art and equine therapy to support them in their daily lives. Staff provide students with approaches to improve their

mental health and well-being and to reduce their anxieties. For example, speech and language therapy staff work with students to improve their verbal communication, and to enable them to speak up and express their views in sessions. Students practise these strategies in sessions such as drama. As a result, students become confident when speaking in public. They undertake key roles in drama performances.

Leaders, tutors and staff develop students' understanding of the world of work and the local community through a range of projects. Staff work with students on projects including supporting a local foodbank. Students worked with a local community church project to provide 'hats for the homeless'. Students are respectful of others and improve their understanding of local community issues.

Leaders and staff are developing the curriculum and support for students with regard to healthy relationships. Staff identify and work with students who require support for their sexual health and well-being where they are vulnerable. They provide students with support, resources and safe spaces to ensure they are safe and develop positive relationships with their peers.

EHCs and the work experience team work closely with most students to identify potential career aspirations at the start of their programme. During their time at college most students undertake work placements, including working in design studios, cafés, and youth clubs. Students benefit from these placements and improve their understanding of the world of work.

Leaders and staff ensure that most students have access to careers education, information, advice and guidance during their time at college. Students work with representatives of the National Careers Service to develop skills such as writing curriculum vitae in preparation for life after college.

Although senior leaders have ensured that transition for students into college is comprehensive and well-planned, transition out of college is less successful for a small minority of students. On these few occasions, students remain in college for too long. Leaders and tutors do not sufficiently identify that these students are ready to leave the college. They do not yet plan well enough for their next steps to enable them to advance into adulthood.

Following the previous inspection, the trustees reviewed the governance of the college. Trustees appointed a director to have oversight of all post-16 colleges within RMT. Trustees have developed the governance structure into three tiers, which includes local and national oversight. Although the oversight of trustees has improved, too often when issues arise trustees intervene and become involved in the day-to-day running of the college. As a result, trustees are not sufficiently independent, and they are not able to challenge senior leaders or to hold them to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff manage safeguarding referrals well within the college. There is an extensive team which works across both colleges to safeguard students. Staff with responsibility for safeguarding complete frequent training to ensure they can identify incidents and support staff and students. The designated and deputy designated safeguarding leads train staff on topics such as staying safe when working online and the 'Prevent' duty. During the inspection, students spoken to by inspectors demonstrated a good understanding of these topics.

Staff monitor and record safeguarding incidents including those related to harmful sexual behaviours. Staff work with internal teams to provide advice and strategies to support students. They refer students to external services when required. For example, staff will increase counselling support to help students with poor mental health when they are experiencing difficulties in managing their well-being.

Staff ensure that appropriate measures are in place for the management and administration of medication within the college. Managers restrict access and administration of medication to named staff, including when students are working off site.

Staff undertake comprehensive risk assessments of practical activities, off-site project work, and work placements. Staff teach students how to work safely. As a result, students demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety in sessions and when at work.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that they identify more precisely when students are ready to leave college. They should ensure that all students receive the advice, training and support they need in preparation for adulthood.
- Trustees should ensure that they use the governance structure they have put in place to support their oversight of the college. Trustees need to ensure they remain independent from the day-to-day running of the college. They need to scrutinise the information they receive to challenge and hold senior leaders to account.

Provider details

Unique reference number	132004
Address	Wollaston Road Amblecote Stourbridge West Midlands DY8 4HF
Contact number	01384 399400
Website	https://www.rmt/org
Principal/CEO	Alex Griffin
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	17–19 May 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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