

Ruskin College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Richard Kirkham, His Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Specialist designated institution

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first reinspection monitoring visit to Ruskin College following publication of the inspection report on 7th December 2022, which found the provider to be inadequate overall.

Ruskin College was established in Oxford in 1899. It has a mission to foster a society where all people, regardless of their background, have access to quality education and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Courses are designed to meet the needs of local residents furthest from the labour market, those who are socially isolated and those seeking a second chance at education. The college was taken over by the University of West London group in August 2021.

At the time of the reinspection monitoring visit, there were 549 learners enrolled, all of whom were over 19 years old. Of these, 258 learners studied trade union studies courses at level 1 and level 2, 268 studied community learning programmes and 23 studied access to higher education programmes in nursing, health and social care or social sciences. Most learners on trade union studies attend courses taught online.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in assessing learners' starting points, to ensure they are placed on the appropriate English language courses?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have initiated a pilot of assessing learners' starting points for those studying English language courses. Teachers evaluate learners' English ability following enrolment, which teachers use to allocate them the most appropriate level of learning.

Leaders have restructured the English language provision to provide learners with teaching at an appropriate level. Leaders have introduced teaching of English language at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. As a result, learners are making good progress in their learning and developing increased confidence. This enables them to participate in activities such as accessing health care and applying for jobs.

Teachers use the information provided by learners during assessment activities to inform lesson planning, such as the inclusion of numeracy. Leaders have not formally recorded learners' outcomes from these assessments. Consequently, teachers and managers are not able to comprehensively assess learners' progress.

What progress have leaders and managers made in the advice and guidance they provide to learners studying community learning programmes, to prepare them for their next steps?

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers have reviewed their processes for providing learners advice and guidance that will support them with their next steps. Leaders recognise the limitations of the current careers information, advice and guidance that they provide.

Leaders and managers have identified strategies to give learners the information they need to prepare for their next steps. Leaders are currently updating the information provided to learners via the college website. Managers and teachers will inform and prepare learners for assessments that will evaluate their abilities against those required for the course they intend to move on to. However, the pace of progress in implementing these changes is too slow, particularly for learners accessing community learning.

Leaders have further planned to provide advice and guidance to learners studying community learning. They are currently reviewing job roles with a possible refocus on front line staff providing tailored information to support learners to make choices based on their needs, aspirations and interests. Inspectors were not able to judge the impact of these actions, as leaders have not yet implemented these plans.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding and safer recruitment arrangements are in place?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have designated senior members of staff to lead on safeguarding arrangements. Leaders have appointed and appropriately trained a designated safeguarding lead and deputy and introduced appropriate policies and procedures for staff to follow to safeguard learners. Leaders have ensured all staff are trained to understand risks and know how to report any concerns. All staff have completed safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training since the previous inspection.

Leaders and managers have developed learners' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, teachers cover awareness of safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism as part of induction and within the learners' programmes. This is reinforced through information around the campus and classrooms, that learners refer to. Learners studying access to higher education courses learn how to keep themselves and others safe in the sector they wish to move into, for example using the code of ethics and health professions register. Learners report they feel safe, and the vast majority know how, and to whom, to report any concerns they may have.

Leaders have made contact with some external agencies but have not yet developed partnerships to understand fully the risks their learners may face, and to whom they could most appropriately refer learners following a concern.

Leaders have introduced a log to track and monitor safeguarding concerns since the inspection. However, the log is not yet effectively used to track all interactions or fully inform why and when a case should be closed. Leaders rely on their own knowledge of cases to be able to completely confirm all actions and support provided to learners.

Leaders have not yet established all localised safeguarding processes. For example, leaders rely on the University's group 'Prevent' duty risk assessment, not fully recognising local risks and control measures that directly support Ruskin College learners.

What progress have trustees and leaders made to ensure trustees have oversight and scrutiny of quality assurance to guarantee improvements in identified weaknesses such as the quality of teaching and learning, and safeguarding? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have introduced governance structures to monitor and challenge leaders. Leaders have formed a board of trustees that feed into the further education and overarching board at the University of West London.

Leaders have ensured the trustees have oversight of safeguarding, providing them with an opportunity to hold leaders to account. As part of a standing agenda item at board level, the designated safeguarding lead presents the progress on safeguarding arrangements implemented since the inspection, such as the new policies and procedures, and ongoing safeguarding cases.

Trustees are aware of their statutory requirements. Leaders have appointed a trustee with leadership responsibilities for safeguarding. All trustees have completed appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training, developing an appreciation of the importance of safeguarding learners.

Trustees' understanding of quality assurance processes and practices is in its infancy. Trustees are aware of leaders' Ofsted risk assessment. However, they have not yet fully scrutinised quality assurance processes, such as the standardisation of observations of teaching and learning. Leaders have introduced a new quality and curriculum group to focus on quality assurance processes and provide challenge where appropriate. This group is imminent but has not yet commenced, so not all trustees have a comprehensive understanding of quality improvement and assurance processes; their ability to provide challenge and hold leaders to account is not yet secure.

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