

Ruskin College

Reinspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	130794
Name of lead inspector:	Roland White, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Specialist designated institution
Address:	Dunstan Road Old Headington Oxford Oxfordshire OX3 9BZ

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

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

At the time of the reinspection monitoring visit, there were 487 learners enrolled, all of whom were over 19 years old. Of these, 247 learners studied trade union studies courses at level 1 and level 2, 218 studied community learning programmes and 22 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. There were no learners in receipt of high-needs funding. Ruskin College does not work with any subcontractors.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Since the full inspection, leaders have made reasonable improvements to how they assess learners' knowledge and abilities. Teachers carefully assess learners' ability in reading, writing, speaking and listening at the beginning of their programme and use this information effectively to place learners on a programme appropriate to their needs. If, early in a programme, teachers judge that a learner's ability is not closely aligned to a programme, they quickly move them to a different group to ensure that they are developing substantial new skills and knowledge. However, leaders have not established robust processes to record the outcomes of these assessments. As a result, they cannot fully monitor and measure learners' progress.

Leaders have used their growing understanding of the skills and knowledge learners need to develop the curriculum successfully. They have refined the English curriculum so that courses are now available at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Consequently, learners benefit from training and learning opportunities that align more closely to their specific needs. Leaders have begun to extend this model to other areas of the curriculum, such as bicycle maintenance, allowing learners to build on what they know, acquiring successfully more challenging and complex skills and knowledge.

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?

Reasonable progress

Leaders ensure that learners on community learning programmes now have access to helpful information, advice and guidance to enable them to prepare well for their next steps in learning or work. As a result, learners are clear on what they plan to move on to and most go on to study at a higher level or obtain work.

Leaders have introduced a highly experienced careers adviser who supports learners skilfully in developing their future plans. For example, the careers adviser visits community learning groups towards the end of the course to assist learners to develop and use helpful individual progression plans. Leaders have sensible plans in place to provide careers advice throughout learners' courses.

For those learners hoping to progress into employment, leaders have created a successful job club. This is particularly helpful for learners whose work life has been disrupted by issues such as health concerns or seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. The job club provides effective opportunities for these individuals to discuss the barriers they face to entering the workforce and receive practical support to access job opportunities.

Most learners on community learning programmes, having completed their course, move on successfully to study other courses offered by the college. The small number who wish to progress to programmes offered by other providers receive relevant information or are signposted to external support services, such as the National Careers Service. However, leaders do not fully evaluate the effectiveness of this support to ensure that it enables learners to reach their intended destination.

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders prioritise the safety and well-being of learners appropriately. They ensure that staff are suitably trained to identify possible signs of concern and know how to raise them with qualified designated safeguarding staff.

Staff know learners well. They are caring and supportive, and consequently learners feel safe and enjoy learning. Staff are attentive to changes in learners' behaviour, recognising that this could indicate a possible cause for concern. Where this occurs, staff have supportive conversations with learners to assess what, if any, support they may require.

Leaders have begun to develop helpful relationships with a range of appropriate external partners to inform their understanding of the potential risks learners may face. For instance, they liaise with relevant professionals to understand the risks from radicalisation and extremism in areas where their learners live and study. Consequently, leaders have a growing appreciation of the risks in these areas. However, they have not yet used this information to enable learners to take steps to protect themselves from potential harm.

Staff now maintain appropriately detailed records of safeguarding and welfare concerns and the support that is put in place. Using this information, leaders identified a growing need among learners for general welfare support. To address this, they have recently recruited a welfare and well-being adviser, but it is too early to assess their impact.

Leaders use a risk-based approach to ensure that appropriate checks are consistently put in place prior to staff working with learners. Leaders maintain a secure, comprehensive record of these checks.

What progress have trustees and leaders made to ensure that 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

Since the full inspection, leaders and trustees have enhanced existing arrangements for oversight successfully. The board of trustees provides strategic governance and is supported well by groups such as the recently implemented curriculum and quality group.

Leaders ensure that trustees receive sufficient, useful information on a range of relevant topics, including the quality of education learners receive and safeguarding. As a result, trustees understand the college well, and have a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Trustees are aware of the actions leaders take to rectify known weaknesses and further develop areas of strength. They monitor leaders' progress to address actions contained in the quality improvement plan and make helpful suggestions for improvement. For example, they requested the inclusion of key performance indicators to monitor progress. Consequently, the plan now contains this information, which helps trustees and leaders monitor the impact of the actions they take.

Trustees understand their responsibility to safeguard learners and receive detailed information to help them fulfil their duties effectively. For example, the designated safeguarding lead regularly attends board meetings, providing detailed updates, including an overview of safeguarding concerns and the support being provided to learners.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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