



Glasshouse College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published December 2005	Provider reference 50003
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Contents

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
Curriculum areas	5
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	6
Main findings	8
Curriculum area inspections	12

Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Glasshouse College
Type of college:	Independent, residential, specialist
Head of college:	Tim Christensen
Address of college:	Wollaston Road, Amblecote, Stourbridge, DY8 4HF
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Chair of trustees:	Aubrey King
Charity number:	1053705
Unique reference number:	50003
Name of lead inspector:	Gill Reay HMI
Dates of inspection:	1 – 4 November 2005

Background of the organisation

1. Glasshouse College is part of the Ruskin Mill Further Education Trust (RMET) and was established as a separate college in May 2000, on the site of the Royal Doulton crystal glass factory in Stourbridge, West Midlands. There are 45 students aged between 16 and 18 and 29 students aged over 19 years of age of which six are female and 68 are male. Three students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college recruits students from across England and there are 20 day students. Residential care forms an integral part of the provision and is characterised by small family and group residences in the local community. The college offers provision for disadvantaged young people with challenging behaviour, including an increasing number of students with Asperger's Syndrome.
2. The college's guiding principles are formed from the work of Rudolph Steiner, William Morris and John Ruskin which includes a holistic approach to all aspects of education. The curriculum incorporates a wide range of learning opportunities under the title of the Ruskin Mill Orientation Course (RMOC). It is primarily based on craft activities where the learner is fully involved in all stages of the process, from raw material to finished product. Students complete a two-year foundation course as part of the RMOC and then progress to vocational courses in years three and four. Thirteen students attend local colleges of further education for specific courses in years three and four, with some students completing work experience in a range of external placements. The college works with the local community, providing a range of facilities for example an organic produce shop, café, arts, crafts, theatre and mask making.
3. Glasshouse College also provides training in therapeutic education for all staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of learning difficulties, behaviour management and adolescence. The college's mission is to provide opportunities for high quality specialist further education in the context of creative communities, cultural initiatives and commercial regeneration.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits; and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management
 - specialist provision in pre-vocational studies and vocational studies.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: grade 3
Achievements and standards	Good: grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: grade 2
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: grade 3

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Curriculum areas

Pre-vocational studies	Satisfactory: grade 3
Vocational studies	Good: grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: grade 3

5. This is a satisfactory college. Standards of learners' work are very good. Learners achieve a wide range of qualifications and develop good communication and work related skills. The monitoring and recording of achievement in literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped. As is tutors understanding of target setting, monitoring and recording of progress. Attendance is good and the college's support and attendance unit is effective in monitoring student's attendance and punctuality.
6. Teaching and learning are good. The use of realistic practical settings motivates learners and provides good opportunities to develop a range of skills. The innovative model of apprenticeship that pairs learners with experienced and skilled craftspeople is highly successful. Although work has been undertaken to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy it remains an area for further development in terms of staff qualifications and the skills of teachers to fully recognise opportunities for learning.
7. The college offers an outstanding range of courses. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. The individual needs of each learner, and those of the wider community, are adequately met. However, the college is not compliant with equality and diversity legislation. Literacy and numeracy provision is underdeveloped.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support. Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive and is effective in providing a starting point for learners' programmes. This is recognised by the college in their self-assessment report and actions are in place to address this weakness. Although improved since the last inspection provision for literacy and numeracy remains an area for improvement.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed heads of college and residential provision have made significant improvements. Quality assurance of the curriculum has improved and there is a timetable of regular management meetings. Trustees are committed and well informed. Safeguarding procedures are in place and arrangements are satisfactory. The college's self-assessment report accurately identified its key strengths and weaknesses. Overall the college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: grade 3

10. The college seeks to improve the quality of its provision by including activities that provide opportunities for learners to develop new skills and experience new forms of expression. The number of learners has increased significantly in the

past three years. A range of improvements have been made to the learning environment on all sites that enable learners to develop skills related to rural and creative activities. This wide range of provision is a significant strength of the college. The college has not had a formal system for observing teaching for some time, though it is planning to develop one. Inspectors found no unsatisfactory teaching, but examples of poor target-setting were found in less effective teaching and learning. Judgements made in the self-assessment report are realistic and largely accurate.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

11. Satisfactory action has been taken to improve the quality of provision, since the recent appointment of the heads of college and residential care. The Information and Learning Technology (ILT) strategy is being effectively implemented. The arrangements for meeting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs continue to be underdeveloped, although more effective use is now being made of naturally occurring situations where these skills are required. Significant progress has been made in developing a quality assurance system, and a pilot year has been completed. Management meetings have been established that require managers to report on progress and issues. Quality improvement is now firmly on the management agenda. However, the college has yet to develop and implement a teacher observation scheme.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- very good standard of students' work
- good development of communication skills and behaviour management strategies
- innovative apprenticeship model with skilled crafts people
- effective support and attendance unit
- outstanding range of courses in real life settings

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the quality assurance arrangements
- the promotion of equality and diversity and compliance with legislation
- the arrangements for the development of literacy and numeracy

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Good: grade 2

12. There is no meaningful distinction between the achievements of learners aged 16 to 18 and those over 19. The college offers a wide range of vocational and craft courses that are accredited through the Open College Network (OCN) ranging from entry level to level 3. The collection of achievement data for literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped and there is some inconsistent recording of progress and achievement. These weaknesses are identified in the self-assessment report and an action plan is in place to monitor improvements.
13. Students on practical courses develop very good levels of specialist skills, such as glass blowing techniques, welding, bronze casting, weaving and felt making. By focusing on practical tasks, students learn to concentrate, manage their own behaviour and produce artefacts of their own. Through drama and mask-making, students gain confidence in public performances. On specific therapy courses, such as story telling and eurhythm, learners develop social skills and self-confidence. Overall here is good development of personal and social skills.
14. Learners are closely involved in the local community. The extended curriculum offers many good opportunities for social, cultural, sporting, and leisure activities. In addition, the policy of placing students in houses in the community facilitates their involvement in local activities. Attendance and punctuality are effectively monitored through the attendance and support unit. Many day students attend college regularly even though they have a history of non-attendance at school. Communication with parents and or carers is good.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

15. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and a significant proportion is outstanding or good. Teaching and learning in realistic practical situations is particularly effective. The most effective tutors are knowledgeable, inspirational and know their students well. Although there is now a greater awareness of how literacy and numeracy skills can be promoted through the curriculum, there remain many missed opportunities to plan, assess, monitor and record achievement in literacy and numeracy. In the small number of lessons where teaching was less effective, learners were not aware of the purpose of the tasks they were completing and quickly lost interest and motivation. In particular, some more able students are not given sufficiently demanding tasks.
16. Tutors, therapists and craftspeople are skilled in their curriculum areas and subject specific target setting is largely satisfactory. However, not all tutors plan to incorporate students' individual core targets into their teaching plans. Most students are motivated and enjoyed their lessons. They willingly participate in activities and grow in confidence through group discussion and one-to-one explanations.

17. The college is particularly successful in tackling the social and communication difficulties of students. Significant support is provided across the extended curriculum. However, further co-ordination and development of the curriculum is needed to address issues of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation in preparation for adult life in the work place and the community.
18. Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive, core targets are identified in individual learning plans (ILP), using the outcomes of the thorough and comprehensive baseline assessment. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of recording progress against these targets and the quality of target setting is variable across the curriculum.
19. Although only in its first full year of operation the educational planning cycle provides a good framework for the monitoring and recording of students' progress. Termly and annual reviews of progress effectively identify students progress and there is very good communication with parents and carers. The self-assessment report accurately identifies the college's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the key questions in the Common Inspection Framework (CIF).
20. The range of programmes is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to learners' enjoyment and achievement. Learners have individual programmes selected from a very wide variety of unusual and stimulating courses. Approximately 50 courses cover work in glass, metal, stone, wood, wool, clay and food. Learners can choose horticulture, horse care, bow making, blacksmithing, narrow boat handling, falconry or estate care. They select from a good range of performing art courses including mask making and puppetry. Courses are designed to introduce learners to skills which they have never previously encountered. These practical and creative crafts are particularly helpful to learners with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and those on the autistic spectrum. Programmes are offered in six week modules which are frequently changed to suit learners' interests and needs. Students' experiences are also enhanced by participation in the extended curriculum and cultural visits.
21. Work-experience placements are well managed and provide learners with good opportunities to develop self-confidence and work related skills. Learners benefit from working alongside artisans in commercial settings. Health and safety is well managed in workshop and practical settings.
22. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory overall. The college responds effectively to meeting the needs and interests of learners and has had particular success in supporting students with behaviour management difficulties. Staff know their students well and relationships based on mutual trust and understanding are developed and valued throughout out the college. Glasshouse College is not compliant with recent equality and diversity legislation.

23. Personal support for learners is good. Learners value the support provided and say that they are able to talk to a wide number of staff. The support and attendance unit is available all day to help with any immediate difficulties. Links between the residential and day provision are good. Learners are encouraged to follow a healthy diet and all produce used is organic and grown on the college's farm by the learners. The college's range of specialist therapeutic and medical provision is satisfactory, providing opportunities that include counselling, speech and language therapy, art therapy, massage and eurhythmics. However, the amount of provision is small and the provision for speech and language therapy is not adequate. Access to support for mental health issues is not always available, and there is no diagnostic assessment or specialist for learners who have been identified as having dyslexia. Staff are skilled at helping learners to manage their own behaviour. Links with parents / carers are good and care plans are satisfactory. The arrangements for learners' transition at the end of the course are satisfactory, and the college has satisfactory links with the Connexions service and other agencies in order to assist learners when moving on.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

24. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The trustees of RMET have a very clear vision and ethos, and support the Trust well. Managers at Glasshouse know what needs to be done to improve the quality of provision, although this is not always adequately reflected in formal strategic planning documentation. As at the previous inspection, learners produce high standards of work and make good progress in the development of social skills. Very recent changes to the management structure has resulted in improved arrangements for reporting, and for the supporting and monitoring of staff. However not all staff are clear about the revised structure.
25. Quality assurance arrangements are developing. A new system, the education planning cycle which focuses on the experience of the learner and the key processes of the curriculum, has been piloted over the past year. The very early signs are that the most recent planning for learning is more effective. However, the college has yet to develop a teacher observation scheme, and most teachers have not been observed for some time. Weaknesses in target setting for individual learners remain. The self-assessment report is realistic and identifies the strengths and most of the weaknesses observed by inspectors.
26. The college is educationally inclusive. Its outstanding range of provision matches the needs of learners. The staff cultivate a climate of respect in which learners feel safe. However, the response of the college to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, has been slow, and the college is not yet fully compliant. Very little of the site is accessible for wheelchair users. Equality of opportunity is not explicitly promoted through the curriculum in order to prepare learners for moving on. The college has recently rewritten its protection

policies and arrangements for vulnerable adults are satisfactory, but teaching staff have not yet been trained. Provision to meet learners' literacy, language and numeracy needs has improved, but the overall arrangements are underdeveloped.

27. Links with the local community and employers are good and provide learners with opportunities to make productive contacts with other craftspeople and artists. Residential provision, the accommodation and resources for teaching, are satisfactory, with good attention paid to health and safety. Some specialist resources are outstanding. Facilities for information communication and technology (ICT) have improved. A new management information system for tracking learners' progress shows an increase in the number of learners meeting their individual targets. The number of teaching staff with teaching and /or specialist qualifications is too low. The college is developing the provision of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) for residential staff at level 3. Specialist support for speech and language therapy is insufficient to meet the needs of all learners as identified on the learner schedules. Financial management is satisfactory and the college provides good value for money.

Curriculum area inspections

Pre-vocational studies

Satisfactory: grade 3

Context

28. There are 25 learners enrolled on year one and 25 in year two of the college's wide range of programmes in practical and creative crafts. Seventy four per cent are aged 16-18. Most courses offer open college accreditation.

STRENGTHS

- good development of communication skills
- good development by learners of behaviour management skills
- outstanding range of programmes

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- the unsatisfactory target setting
- the insufficient development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills

Achievement and standards

29. Learners make good progress in communication skills. They learn to speak appropriately in different situations. They become aware of their own body language and that of others. They understand the importance of eye contact and are able to maintain it. Learners' management of their behaviour improves significantly. By their second year, they have a greater understanding of their reactions and have developed ways of controlling negative behaviours. Their concentration span increases and they know when to request or instigate a change of activity. Their confidence improves. The standard of learners' creative and practical craft work is satisfactory overall. A few learners produce very high standards of work. Learners make satisfactory progress in independence skills through their residential placements.

Quality of provision

30. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and half is good or better. Teachers have a good understanding of individual learners. They use effective strategies to manage learners' behaviour difficulties and give much positive feedback. Learners use a very wide range of specialist equipment and materials that stimulate their interest and develop their skills. However, in a few lessons, learners spend too much time disengaged from the activity. Targets set do not always take learners' needs and abilities sufficiently into account. The noise from some furnaces and fans makes communication difficult in workshops.

There are too few computers for more able learners to present their designs and calculations.

31. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory overall. Well-designed initial assessment allows learners to experience a wide variety of activities. This provides the college with detailed information used to design learners' first half-term programmes. However, initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills in year two and above has not yet been undertaken. There is no screening process to identify dyslexic learners. A few teachers do not adequately record learners' progress.
32. The range of programmes is outstanding. Learners have individual programmes selected from a very wide variety of unusual and stimulating courses. Learner support is satisfactory overall and individual support for learners is good. A high ratio of staff to learners ensures individual teaching. Therapeutic activities include counselling, massage, art therapy and eurhythmics. However, there is insufficient speech and language therapy for all the learners who need it. Dyslexia support is not provided. Learners with mental health difficulties do not always have access to specialist services.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Accommodation and specialist resources are good. Resources are satisfactorily deployed. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. However, no observations of the quality of teaching or support have taken place. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners make choices of courses that are not stereotyped by gender. Literacy and numeracy provision is insufficiently developed. No member of staff is appropriately qualified and most have no training at all in literacy and numeracy teaching. Learners above year one have not had their literacy and numeracy skills fully assessed. Craft teachers do not have enough guidance about relevant ways to develop literacy and numeracy skills within their lessons.

Vocational Studies

Good: grade 2

Context

34. Vocational studies cover a range appropriate to the varied interests and needs of the students. The vocational programmes extend opportunities for learning of, and learning through, traditional crafts within imaginative and innovative locations. There are 26 learners over the age of 19 in years three and four of the RMOC three of whom are female.

Strengths

- high standard of students' work
- strong promotion of health and safety
- good teaching and learning in real work settings
- outstanding range of programmes

Areas for improvement

- the under developed arrangements for the development of literacy and numeracy skills
- the lack of clarity in organisational structure

Achievement and standards

35. Learners have made good progress towards their learning goals; many have made significant progress and achieved targets that increase personal skills, confidence and independence and acquire work disciplines and qualifications. Through the making of artefacts and growing their own food learners are motivated and develop good team working, enterprise and financial skills. Learners talk with confidence of the processes they used to achieve their finished products. However, the assessment and recording of achievement in literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

36. Teaching in vocational programmes is good. All lessons observed were good or better. Teachers have expertise in their crafts or subject areas, detailed knowledge of their learners and the strategies to meet individual needs effectively. In particular, learners benefit from being able to work in real one to one work placements with skilled crafts people.
37. Learners benefit from the highly practical focus of the vocational programmes. In the most effective lessons, teachers exploit the enthusiasm of the learners as they participate in practical activities, usually producing a tangible outcome, for example an engraved glass or a bronze gardening tool. Progress is evidenced in the artefacts, displays of work and in individual student records. There is good communication with parents and carers.

38. Good health and safety practices are well promoted and observed in classrooms and workplaces. There is a strong ethos of ensuring a safe environment for both staff and learners. Learners work in small groups or individually with skilled craftsmen on practical tasks; development is holistic and includes not only the acquisition of vocational foundation skills, but also social and personal skills. These learning opportunities promote independence and are good preparation for transition to post-college careers. Learners sustain effort, sometimes through the application of specific strategies to encourage focus on a task. For example, to help learners with ADHD, tasks involve a high degree of physical coordination that promotes greater concentration and increased duration of effort. Learners gain transferable skills through working together or individually on practical tasks with an end product.
39. There is an outstanding range of vocational programmes. Qualifications include OCN accredited courses and vocational qualifications are available in local further education colleges. The unconventional learning environments capture the imagination of learners to promote expansive methods of teaching and learning. These less structured environments offer wider opportunities for incidental learning to take place. There is equality of opportunity for male and female students to participate in the curriculum according to personal choice.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management of the vocational studies curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good curriculum framework and some outstanding teaching in realistic practical settings. There is insufficient diagnostic assessment of literacy and numeracy. Teachers do not effectively plan for, monitor or record achievement in literacy and numeracy. However, where the potential for integration has been recognised there is some good practice, for example, where the practical application of number is an essential requirement for the successful completion of a task. The college has undergone a recent restructuring and there is now a clear management structure in place. However, it has not yet been clearly communicated to all staff. The findings of inspection are in broad agreement with self-assessment report.