



# Ruskin Mill College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

Better  
education  
and care

## Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published April 2006	Provider reference 133036
--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------

## Contents

---

Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	6
Curriculum areas	6
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	7
Main findings	10
Curriculum area inspections	14

## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Ruskin Mill College
Type of college:	Independent, residential, specialist
Principal:	Michael Frosch
Address of college:	Ruskin Mill College, The Fisheries, Horsley, Gloucestershire, GL6 0PL
Telephone number:	01453 837500
Fax number:	01453 837506
Chair of governors:	Aubrey King
Unique reference number:	133036
Name of lead inspector:	Gill Reay, HMI
Dates of inspection:	27 February - 2 March 2006

## Background of the organisation

1. At the time of the 2002 inspection, Ruskin Mill Education Trust (RMET) was known as Ruskin Mill Further Education Centre (RMFEC) and consisted of two sites, Ruskin Mill at Nailsworth and a satellite project in Stourbridge, which was called the "Glasshouse Project". In 2002, Ofsted inspected RMFEC and its provision over the two sites. In the intervening three and a half years, RMFEC has developed a corporate identity named Ruskin Mill Educational Trust (RMET), that operates three separate colleges, Ruskin Mill College in Nailsworth, Glasshouse College in Stourbridge and Freeman College in Sheffield.
2. Ruskin Mill 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. There are 94 learners funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) of which 72 are male and 22 are female, 86 are residential and 8 are day learners. Forty five learners are aged between 16 and 18 years of age and 57 are aged over 19 years of age. Seven learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds. 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. Learners complete a two-year foundation course as part of the RMOC and then progress to vocational courses. Ten learners attend local colleges of further education (FE) for specific courses with some learners completing work experience in a range of external placements. The college works with the local community, providing a range of facilities for example organic produce, café, arts, crafts, and organic trout.
3. Ruskin Mill 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](http://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 and vocational subjects.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: grade 2
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	Good: grade 2
Vocational	Good: grade 2

## Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: grade 2

5. This is a good college. Standards of learners' work are very good. Learners achieve a wide range of qualifications and develop good communication, self-management and work related skills. The monitoring and recording of achievement in literacy, numeracy and communication has improved since the last inspection. Attendance is good and the college's support and attendance unit is effective in monitoring attendance and punctuality.
6. Teaching and learning are good overall. The use of realistic practical settings motivates learners and provides outstanding opportunities to develop a wide range of skills. The innovative model of apprenticeship that pairs learners with experienced and skilled craftspeople is highly successful. Pre-entry assessment is comprehensive and the baseline profile is effective in providing a starting point for learners' programmes. Tutors' understanding of target setting, monitoring and recording of progress is developing but understanding of the processes remains variable. There are insufficient numbers of teachers holding a relevant teaching qualification.
7. The college offers an outstanding range of courses. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity underpins all activities. Work on developing main buildings to ensure accessibility for people with mobility difficulties is well managed. The individual needs of learners, and those of the wider community, are well met. However, the college is not compliant with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) legislation.
8. Learners receive good guidance and support. Initial assessment is effective in identifying additional learning needs. The college is particularly successful in supporting learners with communication or behavioural difficulties. A wide range of therapists work well together and are involved in all aspects of learners' progress. This support contributes effectively to learners' personal, social and emotional development. Transition is particularly well planned and there are very effective links with Connexions and local agencies.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The heads of college and residential homes have a clear understanding of operational and strategic management and have made significant improvements since the last inspection. However, several of these improvements, for example the quality assurance of the curriculum, have only recently been introduced and their impact has yet to be fully evaluated. Day to day operational management of the curriculum is good. Trustees are committed and well informed. There are comprehensive procedures in place to promote the safety, well being and protection of learners. All staff have undertaken training in the area. The

college's self-assessment report accurately identifies its key strengths and areas for improvement. Overall the college provides good value for money.

Capacity to improve

Good: grade 2

10. The college demonstrates a good capacity to improve. Inspectors found the self-assessment report to be accurate with the strengths and areas for improvement matching those found by inspectors. The self-assessment process includes a group of senior staff but not all staff and trustees are directly involved in the process. Feedback from students, parents and carers informs the process. A three year development plan clearly identifies strategic priorities for improvements. A quality improvement cycle and a wide range of policies and procedures are now in place. However, implementation has been slow and the quality improvements have not yet completed an annual cycle. Data collection is much improved but its analysis and use are underdeveloped. Literacy, numeracy and communication are well embedded in some curriculum areas. A system of observing the quality of teaching in the formal curriculum has been implemented, but this is not yet in place in the extended curriculum. The wide range of provision and outstanding resources are a significant strength of the college.

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

11. The college has made satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues of the previous inspection. The development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum has improved. The college is continuing to work on embedding this support within learners' overall provision. A teaching observation scheme is now in place and is beginning to bring about the required improvements. The assessment, planning and recording of individual student achievement has been improved through the introduction of its education planning cycle, although currently not all staff are confident about using the system. The college is implementing its information and communication technology (ICT) strategy well.

Key strengths of the college

### *Strengths*

- very good standards of students' work
- very good teaching of practical skills
- good development of communication skills and behaviour management strategies
- good links with the community and employers
- outstanding range of courses in real life settings
- good operational management
- outstanding resources



## Areas for improvement

*The college should address:*

- the lack of tutors' teaching qualifications
- the target setting and monitoring of progress
- quality assurance arrangements
- compliance with Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 legislation
- programme review and evaluation

## 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 an extensive range of vocational and craft courses, some of which are accredited through the Open College Network (OCN) and some through the Ruskin Mill Orientation Course (RMOC). The collection of achievement data has significantly improved over the last three years. Analysis of data and its use in target setting are underdeveloped.
13. There is very good development of learners' communication and social skills. The education planning cycle (EPC) quality assurance reports identify some inconsistent recording of progress, achievement and poor achievement of individual core targets. These weaknesses are identified in the self-assessment report and an action plan is in place to bring about improvements.
14. Achievement of qualifications is good. In 2004/05 the following OCN units were achieved: entry level 32 units; level one 137 units; and level two 75 units. Additional qualifications include awards from the Royal Agricultural College, the Royal Institute of Public Health, national vocational qualifications (NVQ), AQA, City and Guilds and LANTRA. Core targets are also now systematically tracked and pre-vocational achievements are analysed by qualification for 2004/05.
15. Learners develop very good levels of specialist skills, such as stained glass, weaving, felt making, land management, pottery, furniture production, horticulture, farming, ICT and concrete casting. By focusing on practical tasks, learners concentrate well, manage their own behaviour and produce high quality artefacts. On specific therapy courses, such as story telling, learners develop social skills and self-confidence. The practical nature of much of the curriculum increases learners' motivation, enjoyment and understanding of a healthy life style.
16. Internal and external work experience placements are well managed. Data collected over the last three years shows increased participation and a wider base of external placements. There is good development of work related skills.
17. Learners are closely involved in the local community. The extended curriculum offers many opportunities for social, cultural, sporting, and leisure activities. In addition, the policy of placing students in houses in the community supports their involvement in local activities. Attendance and punctuality are effectively monitored through the attendance and support unit. Communication with parents and/or carers is good.

18. Health and safety in the workshops is satisfactory and individual learners' risk assessments are appropriate. There are good strategies in place to manage learners' behaviour that enable learners to develop good self-management skills.

Quality of provision

Good: grade 2

19. There is much good teaching and a significant proportion is outstanding. Teaching in realistic practical situations is very effective and maximises the outstanding natural resources of the college. Staff know their students well and there is a strong ethos of respect and trust between tutors and learners.
20. Literacy, numeracy and communication are now embedded in some curriculum areas. The college has clear plans to develop this work and the strategy of literacy, numeracy and communication tutors working alongside vocational tutors has been particularly successful. Tutors, therapists and craftspeople are skilled in their curriculum areas. However, not all tutors fully understand how to set appropriate targets and use them to plan effective teaching and learning. Most learners are motivated and enjoy their lessons.
21. The college is particularly successful in using well planned strategies that address the behavioural, social and communication difficulties of learners. Significant support is provided across the extended curriculum by house parents, neighbourhood heads and personal tutors. However, further co-ordination and development of the extended curriculum and its links to individual learning plans (ILPs) and the formal curriculum are underdeveloped.
22. Pre-entry and initial baseline assessments are comprehensive. Core targets are identified in ILPs, using the outcomes of the baseline profile. A rigorous audit was undertaken of ILP targets in the autumn term 2005. Some good practice was identified, but also some inconsistencies in the recording of progress against these targets; training is now in place to support tutors to improve their target setting.
23. Although in its first full year of operation, the educational planning cycle provides a good framework for the monitoring and recording of learners' progress. Termly and annual reviews of progress effectively identify learners' progress and there is very good communication with parents and carers. The self-assessment report accurately identifies the college's strengths and areas of improvement.
24. The range of programmes is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to learners' enjoyment, achievement, positive contribution and understanding of economics in their community. Learners' programmes are selected from a wide variety of unusual and stimulating courses. Courses range through work in animal husbandry, baking, food preservation, fermentation, computing, green woodwork, papermaking, photography, fish farming and stained glass. Some learners also attend level 3 courses in local general FE colleges. Courses

are designed to introduce learners to skills that 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. Learners' experiences are enhanced by participation in the extended curriculum and cultural visits.

25. Work-experience placements are extensive and well managed. Data over three years shows that the college has increased learners' participation in work experience. The number of external work placements has also increased. The work experience programme is very flexible and provides good opportunities to develop self-confidence and work related skills. Learners benefit from working alongside artisans in realistic settings. Health and safety in workshop and practical settings is satisfactory.
26. Guidance and support for learners is good. Learners value the support provided by the college. Learner groups are small with high levels of support. Arrangements for responding to needs for immediate intensive one to one support are good. A wide range of therapists work well together and are involved in all aspects of learners' progress from pre-entry assessment to transition. Regular meetings take place between learners, personal tutors and houseparents. This support contributes effectively to the progress learners make in their personal, social and emotional development. Staff are skilled at helping learners to manage their own behaviour. Links with parents and carers are good and care plans are satisfactory but lack targets. Transition is particularly well planned and there are very effective links with the local Connexions service and other agencies to assist learners with the next stages of their lives. There are good arrangements for tracking and recording of learners' destinations after they leave the college. A learner forum has now been established and representatives support the interests of the student body well. The majority of learners reside in community housing.

#### Leadership and management

Satisfactory: grade 3

27. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The trustees have a very clear vision and support the Trust well. Operational management at Ruskin Mill College is good. The vision and mission of the college and the educational trust at a wider level is understood and shared by all staff. Strategic planning is thorough and managers know what needs to be done to improve the quality of provision. Managers have clear roles and responsibilities. A new management information system enables effective tracking of learners' progress. Learners produce high standards of practical work and make good progress in the development of social and communication skills.
28. Quality assurance policies and procedures are now in place. The implementation of quality assurance arrangements has been slow and monitoring has not yet completed an annual cycle. The education planning cycle is a useful framework that focuses on the experience of the learner and the key processes of the curriculum. The college's teacher observation scheme

- is effective in bringing about improvements. The scheme has not yet been implemented for staff in the extended curriculum. The self-assessment process is largely accurate but is not yet fully inclusive. All staff are not routinely involved in evaluating their own curriculum area or the broader aspects of college activities. There are detailed improvement plans to address areas of identified weakness. These plans are in the early stages of being monitored.
29. Staff are provided with a wide range of training opportunities. The college acknowledges that both induction training for new staff and increasing the number of staff with teaching qualifications are areas for development. New staff value the support given by tutor mentors in assisting their understanding of the requirements of their roles.
30. Comprehensive procedures are in place to promote the safety, well being and protection of learners. The college meets the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). It is very good at promoting an awareness of disability within the local community. A thorough accessibility audit has been carried out and work to make the main buildings more accessible is well planned and partially completed. Equality of opportunity is promoted well within the curriculum. Trustees are well informed and involved in the monitoring of developments of the college and are aware of their statutory obligation to ensure the college's adherence to legislation. However, they have not monitored or ensured that the response of the college to the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is fully compliant. Policies, procedures and training for the safeguarding of learners are well managed and carefully monitored.
31. The learning environment and facilities at Ruskin Mill College are outstanding. Financial management is good and the college provides good value for money.

## Curriculum area inspections

Pre-vocational subjects

Good: grade 2

### Context

32. The college offers an extensive range of pre-vocational opportunities through the Ruskin Mill Orientation Course in exceptional learning environments. All 94 learners study a range of tasters during their first and second years. All learners experience pre-vocational subjects in their programmes. Some third and fourth year learners will have pre-vocational elements in their programmes.

### *STRENGTHS*

- very good achievement of practical skills
- much good teaching
- excellent range of programmes that meets learners' interests
- very good support strategies

### *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- inconsistent target setting
- insufficient tracking of progress and achievement

### Achievement and standards

33. Learners demonstrate very good levels of practical skills across a broad range of vocational subjects, including leather making, ironmongery, weaving, jewellery making, book binding, gardening and felt making, producing artefacts that are of very high quality. Learners confidently contribute ideas and suggestions about the items they are making and demonstrate high levels of fine and gross motor skill development; for example, in jewellery making and weaving. Excellent levels of concentration, focus and application over extended periods of time are also demonstrated by learners. Many learners achieve improved behaviour. Attendance rates are high.
34. Achievement of OCN units is good and has increased over time from an average of 2.98 units per learner in 2003/04 to an average achievement of 3.36 units per learner in 2004/05. This represents an increase of 12% overall.

### Quality of provision

35. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most activities are well matched to learners' individual needs. However, at times a minority of learners spend too much time waiting for tutors' attention and resources. High expectations by teachers promote a good work ethic in learners. Lessons offer learners

- variety and choice with many of the options offering challenge and extension opportunities. For example, in an iron work lesson learners were encouraged to produce a more complicated product rather than repeat what they had already done successfully.
36. In the best lessons literacy, numeracy and communication are seamlessly delivered through naturally occurring opportunities. For example, in a book binding lesson learners were measuring ribbon and the tutor took the opportunity to introduce estimating skills using the width of a finger to measure one centimetre and the width of two fingers to measure one inch.
  37. Examples of excellent planning to cover for staff absence were evident with appropriate activities available for learners joining lessons. In the book binding area, learners who have previously attended can pick up a project they had been doing. Learners new to the area are able to undertake activities that provide opportunities for achievement by the end of that individual lesson.
  38. Too few teachers hold a relevant teaching qualification. There is considerable variation in teachers' understanding of how to set appropriate targets, and use them in planning, monitoring and reviewing learning. However, two teachers are now qualified to level four in numeracy. The embedding of literacy, numeracy and communication is successful where teachers work alongside vocational tutors. Communication strategies are very effective.
  39. Initial and baseline assessments are good and used by teachers to develop individual learning plans. Evidence from initial assessment indicates that many learners arrive with histories of very challenging behaviour and this area is very successfully addressed by clearly communicated whole college behaviour management strategies.
  40. The RMOC provides an excellent range of activities that enables learners to design unique programmes. The range is innovative, engaging, and delivered in exceptional learning environments. Excellent use is made of the natural environment for teaching. Learners gain insight and respect for nature and its processes. The concept of "seed to table" is well understood. Skilled crafts people and artisans develop good practical skills in learners. Work experience opportunities are well managed and there are extensive links with external employers.
  41. Support for students is good. Personal tutors, house parents and other staff know their learners well and there is an ethos of trust and respect between learners and staff. Learners have access to a wide range of specialist therapies.

## Leadership and Management

42. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear focus on improving performance through staff development and training. The self-assessment

report provides an accurate assessment of strengths and areas for improvement supported by a comprehensive action plan for improvement. However, the involvement of all staff in evaluating their curriculum areas is underdeveloped. Understanding of the educational planning cycle is varied but improving. Data collection and analysis has also improved. Equality and diversity are well promoted throughout the curriculum.

## Vocational subjects

Good: grade 2

43. The Ruskin Mill College curriculum includes a three-year course called the Ruskin Mill Orientation Course and all learners participate in this programme. The total number of learners on the programme is 94. All participate in both pre-vocational and vocational subjects. The vocational students' learning programme consists of a range of accredited courses in textiles, pottery, furniture production, forge work, jewellery, ICT, concrete casting and land work. Learners are also placed in internal and external working environments around the college site and the local area. There are opportunities for learners to progress from entry level to level 3. Most learners' programmes contain elements of both pre-vocational and vocational activities.

## *STRENGTHS*

- very good development of practical and creative skills
- outstanding teaching of practical skills
- good awareness of environment and culture
- good support for learners
- good mentoring and peer support for tutors
- outstanding environment and resources for teaching and learning

## *AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

- underdeveloped tutor understanding of target setting
- underdeveloped skills in planning teaching and assessing progress

## Achievement and Standards

44. There is very good achievement of practical skills. Learners achieve high standards of artwork and produce well designed craft products. They can select and manipulate materials, handle tools confidently, work industriously, confidently and with care.
45. In lessons, learners achieve very good ICT skills in desk top publishing and image manipulation. Learners understand where natural materials come from and the possibilities of turning them into something useful and aesthetic. They develop knowledge of the seasonal cycles and the possibilities of working in farming settings. Learners are encouraged to make creative decisions and understand how natural materials originate. Social, cultural and environmental



awareness is developed and a high sense of achievement is shared amongst learners.

### Quality of Provision

46. The majority of teaching is good or better but a minority is unsatisfactory. Individualised learning programmes ensure that the outstanding range of learning sites is used effectively. Learning takes place in situ and learners experience the reality of work and the challenges of weather and nature. Outstanding resources and materials are drawn from woodlands, livestock, farming and plants so that the willow, clay, wool, and green wood that the learners use in practical lessons demonstrate the origins of day to day produce and items.
47. Tutors are highly qualified craftspeople and land-based workers but few hold teaching qualifications. There is extensive knowledge of rural traditions and environmental work. Traditional farming and craft techniques include the use of hand tools, the promotion of sustainable lifestyles and respect for nature.
48. Some core targets in individual learning plans are too generalised and difficult for tutors to interpret. Targets are not always updated once learners achieve a goal. In some cases learners could be progressing to higher levels and are underachieving by remaining on courses that are at an inappropriate level. Too many learner targets do not have sufficient challenge and tutors cannot interpret core targets in relation to the subject they are teaching.
49. In some cases learners are not aware of their vocational targets or the overall purpose for carrying out a practical activity. Nor have they made sufficient progress in acquiring vocabulary or underpinning knowledge about the subject area.
50. Key elements of practical work are not systematically planned into lessons or referenced in ILPs and tracking documents. The key planning tool devised by managers is not yet fully accepted or understood by all tutors or used to its full potential. In-house training has taken place and more is planned for tutors in the areas of teaching and learning. However, some tutors remain unclear about recording progress and reviewing learning plans. Some tutors miss opportunities to embed literacy and numeracy into the curriculum.
51. There is an outstanding range of learning opportunities and a good match between individual learners' needs and their programmes. Internal and external work experience opportunities have increased in the last two years. There is a very good match between learners' interests and their placements. The process of finding and monitoring work placements is well managed. Good use is made of learning in placements to support achievement in national vocational qualifications and gathering evidence for OCN portfolios. Digital cameras are used very well to produce photographic evidence.

52. Support for learners is good. Tutors use coaching and praise as well as positive reinforcement of core tasks and personal goals. Tutors have good communication systems that ensure seamless support and care is provided. There are high levels of trust; learners feel safe and supported by personal tutors and house parents.

### Leadership and Management

53. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Mentoring and peer support for tutors is good. Peer supervision sessions are well structured and managed. The college does not have a formal system for sharing good practice. For example, where particularly good lesson planning and integration of numeracy is in place there is no method for demonstrating this practice to tutors who need to develop teaching strategies.
54. The self-assessment report is accurate but there is insufficient contribution to the process by staff and there is a lack of recognition of the process at tutor level. Equality and diversity are well promoted throughout all learners' activities and relationships with staff.