

## ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College:            Ruskin Mill College (Ruskin Mill Educational Trust)

Date of visit:                3 July 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

### Achievement and standards

How well has target setting been improved? Are the principles of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) well established?

- The process of target setting is improving. The college has carried out training and development work to try and ensure a higher degree of consistency amongst staff in their implementation of target setting and monitoring of students' progress. In particular, personal tutors have been trained in how to monitor students' overall educational journey whilst at college; and vocational teachers have been trained in how to use students' vocational skills targets to inform their more general personal goals. The college acknowledges that this cultural change of how staff need to work in order to set, track and measure students' progress towards a complex web of targets and goals is still in transition.
- Good practice has been well disseminated by making available to teachers some clear high quality audio visual examples and many teachers have adapted strategies to improve their recording of students' progress. It is too early to judge the impact of this work on outcomes for students.

### Quality of provision

How well integrated are literacy and numeracy across the curriculum?

- The college uses its specialist team of four part-time and two full-time literacy and numeracy teachers in a number of increasingly effective ways. They attend many vocational sessions and work alongside vocational teachers, supporting the development of students' literacy and numeracy in a directly vocational context. Partly as a result of this closely personal approach, vocational teachers are becoming more adept at identifying opportunities to refer to relevant literacy and numeracy skills in the planning and execution of their lessons. The team of specialist teachers find some time within vocational sessions to work directly with students

who have specific literacy and numeracy support needs. They have also given training to the tutor mentor team, increasing their awareness of how and where literacy and numeracy can be integrated into the vocational curriculum. From September 2007, the specialist team will set explicit literacy and numeracy aims for each student; these aims will inform the core targets that personal tutors will then set for each student for communications. The coordination of this work has been slow to develop, and the impact upon the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills has not yet been evaluated.

How rigorous is the lesson observation process and how well has it fed into staff development to aid improvement?

- The college has developed an effective system for observing teaching and learning. Trained tutor mentors undertake graded lesson observations. The college has set itself an aspirational target of having 70% of sessions graded good or outstanding. The lesson observations are well documented and lead to clear developmental action points for improvement. From September 2007 this process will be enhanced by peer observations undertaken with two other specialist colleges.
- The lesson observation scheme has led to a more explicit focus now being given to three themes that the college has identified as in need of further improvement: the embedding of literacy and numeracy learning in lessons; the tracking of individual learning goals and the recording of outcomes in lessons; and the creation by teachers of opportunities to differentiate between students working at the three identified levels of ability. However, in records of lesson observations to date, these themes receive little explicit attention. The college intends to focus on them more directly from September 2007.

How effective is transition planning and have vocational opportunities been further developed since the last inspection?

- The college made significant progress in this area. It has a well established course structure that integrates pre-vocational, vocational and transitional planning and activities for students across three distinct levels of ability. Good use is made of the Connexions service to advise and guide students from their second year onwards as they begin to consider their prospective options after leaving the college. A student's personal transition plan is developed with this adviser and their personal tutor, and a good balance is struck between pursuing a strong vocational interest and considering realistic transition options in supported or open employment or in a voluntary work setting. In students' third year, some types of support are strategically removed and the close attentions of a personal tutor are replaced by a seminar structure in a larger group as students are prepared for leaving the college's supportive framework. Good

use is made, after careful assessment, of course provision in local mainstream further education colleges, and these links prepare some students well for when they leave the college. The college also makes effective use of a wide range of both internal and external work experience opportunities and vocational taster sessions to give students as full and varied a range of experiences as possible before they leave.

## Leadership and management

What progress has been made with regard to the college becoming fully compliant with recent equalities legislation?

- Ruskin Mill Educational Trust (RMET) is compliant with the Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000 legislation and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). The Trust's equality and diversity policy and procedure, race equality policy and associated action plan were revised in April 2007. The disability equality scheme and action plan and the gender equality scheme and action plan have been developed in consultation with both staff and students and in partnership with other organisations and a local general further education college.
- The college has a strong focus on the training of staff in equality and diversity. There is an established equality and diversity working group which monitors well this area of work. The group consists of staff, learners and other stakeholders. The group has quite clear terms of reference and each of the Trust's three colleges have focused in upon one specific area in depth and then share this expertise across the three colleges. Ruskin Mill has taken responsibility developing the work on disability and age.
- The process for conducting impact assessments is established but managers acknowledge that there is still much development needed in this area. The college has had recent success in achieving the employment standard target, 'Positive about Disability', which was identified in their disability action plan.

What progress has been made to increase the numbers of tutors' with appropriate teaching qualifications?

- The RMET is successfully developing a staff training facility called the Hiram Academy. It is the aim of the Hiram Academy to deliver appropriate in-house teacher training using a variety of professionals and qualified staff. The college has researched and identified an appropriate Lifelong Training UK (LLUK) teacher training qualification. A staff team has

been established to explore other training needs of the college and to ensure that training is more consistent and relevant to need.

- The Hiram Academy has recently created a staff induction programme, which is being accredited at level 2 and 3. This induction framework will be phased in each of the trust's colleges starting August 2007. Currently 10 tutors have participated in C&G 7407 teaching qualification and it is expected that all participants will complete this course by September 2007. The college is planning to offer another teacher training course for the next academic year for up to 20 tutors. It is anticipated that this course will be the C&G 7303 (Preparing to teach), which will lead to the 7304 (Certificate in Teaching).

What action has been taken to strengthen quality assurance and improvement processes, particularly curriculum review and self assessment?

- Systematic quality assurance procedures are improving. The structure for managing tutors, including quality assurance, has been reviewed and will change starting September 2007. Under the new structure the tutor mentors will have the title 'tutor team leaders' and will be the first line managers for a team of tutors who teach similar subjects. It is anticipated that this change will allow a more inclusive and coherent review and evaluation of the college's range of provision. The college has reviewed the self-assessment report (SAR) process to make it more inclusive and involve all groups of staff. The views of the residential house parents now appropriately inform self assessment.
- A quality assurance monitoring calendar has been developed to assist with the regular analysis of data which will then link to appropriate target setting. The tutor mentor team are grading lesson observations, from which a grade profile is developed and whole college improvement targets are set using this information.
- During 2006/07, the tutor team leaders completed a full cycle of lesson observations and staff reviews for all tutors. In addition, the tutor team leaders have created a simple procedure for following up on inadequate lessons and this has been successfully implemented. As a result, the college judges that number of inadequate lessons has decreased from 6% in autumn 2006 to 2% in spring 2007.

Has the college done all it can reasonably do to ensure the

safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults? Have all staff been appropriately trained in this area?

- Arrangements to promote and prioritise the safeguarding of students are comprehensive. There are two student protection officers who take responsibility for safeguarding students. A single central vetting and recruitment record is well established and all staff are checked as required. Appropriate staff training has taken place on safeguarding for teaching, residential, administrative staff and trustees. However, there is no named trustee to take overall responsibility for safeguarding issues.
- Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and signed off by the principal. RMET now has a policy and procedure for work experience that links directly to the Learning and Skills Council's safe learner concept. There is an improved framework for placing students in external work experience.