

Glasshouse College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50003

Name of lead inspector: Kath Smith HMI

Last day of inspection: 27 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent specialist college

Address: Woolaston Road, Amblecote, Stourbridge,
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Information about the provider

1. Glasshouse College is part of the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust (RMET) which has three colleges across the country. Glasshouse was established as a separate college in May 2000. The college recruits from across England. There are currently 29 day and 56 residential learners. Day learners are from the local area. All learners are funded by the Learning and Skills Council. The main Glasshouse College site is situated in a former glassworks at Stourbridge. There are two other sites at Valehead Farm (four miles from the main site) and Greenwich Wood (eight miles from the main site). The college caters for learners with a variety of complex needs associated with learning differences and/or difficulties, including those who have challenging or extremely vulnerable behaviour. The college's guiding principles are formed from the work of Rudolf Steiner, William Morris and John Ruskin and include a holistic approach to all aspects of education. The college incorporates a wide range of learning opportunities which are primarily based on craft activities.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to18)	51 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	34 full-time learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

Overall effectiveness

2. The college's overall effectiveness is good. The college has good capacity to improve the outcomes for learners and the quality of provision. It has made good progress with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Quality assurance arrangements are more rigorous and destination outcomes for learners have significantly improved with a high percentage of learners progressing onto further education and training. The good standards of teaching and learning have been maintained in practical subjects but the quality of classroom activities and the recording of progress made by learners in basic skills is less effective. Learners are actively involved in developing highly personalised learning programmes with the opportunity to gain qualifications in their chosen vocational area and in their social, personal and communication skills. Learners greatly benefit from the outstanding partnerships and excellent range of curriculum activities on offer. These include many work experience opportunities that also successfully promote learners' good development of social, personal and communication skills. The learning experience is greatly enhanced by learners' participation in well planned extended curriculum and enrichment activities although these are less well developed for day learners. Support for learners is good. However, the newly adopted system for supporting the learners in identifying their progress towards their long term goals is inconsistently implemented. Leaders and managers have the needs and interests of learners at the centre of the college's culture and planning processes. The profile of equality and diversity has been successfully raised and its promotion is now satisfactory but the college has yet to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions and initiatives. The college actively seeks the views

of learners and outside agencies but does not yet sufficiently seek the views of employers.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners make good progress in their independence, social, personal and communication skills to enable them to integrate successfully into the wider community.
- Learners successfully develop skills required to progress on to further education, training and employment. They achieve relevant nationally recognised qualifications in line with their vocational programmes and social and personal development.
- Learners make satisfactory progress in their basic skill development but this is insufficiently recorded across all areas of the curriculum.
- Learners are confident in the ability of staff to manage challenging behaviours and feel safe as a result. They adopt safe working practices and handle tools and equipment appropriately.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy taking part in practical activities where staff expertise and good support enables learners to progress well.
- Learners are less engaged in classroom based activities where planned learning sessions do not use a variety of activities and are too reliant on paper based resources. The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- Learners greatly benefit from the highly personalised learning programmes and outstanding range of curriculum activities on offer. Enrichment activities are varied and well planned but less well developed for day learners.
- The outstanding partnership arrangements provide significantly improved outcomes for learners including a wide range of work experience placements.
- Support for learners is good. Transition arrangements are very effective in helping learners progress to their future placements. However the newly introduced system in place to support learners in identifying their own progress towards their long term goals is inconsistently implemented and managed.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers provide a clear strategic direction with the needs and interests of learners at the centre of decisions taken about improvement planning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college does not yet sufficiently evaluate the impact of actions taken or identify areas for concern in relation to all the equality strands.
- The learners' views are actively sought to inform self assessment. However, employers' views are insufficiently vigorously sought.
- The trustee board provides good support and challenge to senior managers. The college provides good value for money.

What does Glasshouse College need to do improve further?

- Improve the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills through the better recording and review of their progress.
- Improve the quality of classroom based teaching and learning, through the use of more varied activities and a greater variety of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT).
- Increase the planned enrichment and extended curriculum opportunities for day learners to develop their own interests and personal and social skills development.
- Ensure that the newly developed system of supporting and monitoring the learner journey is consistently implemented and managed, to enable them to be more actively involved in identifying progress toward their long term goals.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity by planning and targeting actions more systematically so that the college can evaluate the effectiveness of its actions and initiatives.
- Seek and use the views of employers so that these can contribute to the college's self assessment and evaluation process.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the other learners and tutors who are very friendly
- the enjoyment and fun they have at college
- the good food
- the staff who are very helpful
- practical lessons which help with their experiences faced in later life
- how the college improves their independence and self reliance
- independent travel training
- the very caring and supportive houseparents
- how they are encouraged by staff to work independently

What learners would like to see improved:

- more break times
- staff should listen to learners more often
- more football
- the toilets which are often blocked or dirty
- more money for some new mini buses
- more independent travel training

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

3. The college has good capacity to improve further. It has maintained the high standard of learners' work and its strengths in the quality of provision since the last inspection. Partnership working has strengthened significantly and is directly benefiting the experience and well being of learners. Managers and trustees provide a clear and ambitious vision for the college and are successfully raising the aspirations of its learners. Quality assurance arrangements have improved since the last inspection, particularly around the monitoring of teaching and learning. There has been a marked improvement in individual learner target-setting. The college now meets its duties under equality and diversity legislation and the profile of this issue has been raised considerably. Some aspects of equality and diversity are promoted well. Overall, however, plans and actions are not always sufficiently explicit or systematic to enable the college to measure the impact across all equality strands. Progress has been made in integrating the development of literacy and numeracy within practical subjects. However, there is insufficient recording of literacy and numeracy skill development. Self assessment is embedded and used very well to promote improvement. The views of learners are used well as part of self review but the views of employers are not considered enough.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

4. Outcomes for learners are good. There are no differences in the achievements of different groups of learners. They enjoy life at the college and attendance is good. Many learners gain entry, level 1 and 2 qualifications in a wide variety of vocational and social skills relevant to their learning programmes. They produce items to a high standard within craft workshops. At a recent glass festival, items of glassware produced by learners were exhibited alongside professional artisans' work. Learners' produce work of high quality in outdoor activities, such as repairing and maintaining fencing, caring for animals, and conservation tasks.
5. Learners make good progress in developing their practical vocational skills. They gain a very good understanding of the skills needed to successfully move onto further education, training and employment. A high percentage progress onto vocational programmes at local colleges and a few gain voluntary and paid employment. Most learners' make good progress in developing work related skills to help them achieve economic well being. Although basic skills are effectively developed in practical skills, progress in this area across all curriculum activities is less evident.

6. Learners' confidence, independence and self reliance increases significantly. They learn to travel independently, to cook for themselves and to live co-operatively with others. Good progress is made by learners in their personal, social and communication skills. The ability to interact appropriately and meaningfully with others improves significantly. They are more able to successfully communicate their needs and aspirations and to integrate more effectively in the wider community.
7. Learners gain a deeper understanding of themselves, how their behaviour impacts on others and what they need to do to maximise their potential. Learners improved mental health and their raised awareness of their disability, enables them to cope more effectively and appropriately with concerns and anxieties that effect their ability to learn.
8. Learners successfully adopt safe working practices and are very aware of the potential dangers associated with the vocational and practical activities they take part in. Many learners report that they have been subject to bullying in their previous placements and have felt, in the past, vulnerable and insecure. The college creates a culture in which mutual respect is actively encouraged and incidents related to aggressive behaviour are infrequent. Learners are confident in the ability of staff to manage learners' behaviour appropriately and feel safer as a result.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

9. Teaching and learning are good in practical sessions, which form the significant majority of sessions across the college. Tutors are very skilled and experienced and have significant industrial and commercial expertise, which they use to good effect with learners. Tutors provide very effective individual coaching and use very clear, step-by-step instructions and explanations. The use of questioning is generally good and helps learners well in the development of their speaking and listening skills, as well as the ability to think for themselves and work independently. Learners work productively, at a good pace and with appropriate levels of challenge. Teaching and learning in more classroom based sessions are satisfactory overall, as is learners' progress in these sessions; however, there is insufficient variety of activities. Learners are not active enough or fully engaged in less well planned sessions, and there is an over-reliance on the use of paper-based worksheets. The use of resources and materials to support teaching and learning is good for the practical based subjects. However, information and communications technology (ICT) is insufficiently used throughout the college to promote and support learning.
10. Assessment is well organised and thorough. The assessment period is very effective in identifying learners' starting points. Ongoing assessment further supports the effective planning and development of individualised programmes. The use of target setting and recording of progress in learning plans is good in relation to the development of practical skills and personal and social skills.

However the recording of learners' progress in literacy and numeracy is insufficient.

11. Learners select from a very good range of activities which are wholly responsive to learners' interests and needs. All learners have personalised timetables with options that include creative, therapeutic and craft based practical activities. This ensures that learners have the option to sample different activities before choosing a vocational pathway. Learners have good opportunities to undertake nationally accredited qualifications to enable them to make good progress in their employability skills and access to further education and training. Extensive work experience opportunities ensure that all learners have access to a very good range of internal and external placements, although opportunities are missed to link their work placement experience to relevant learning in college. Enrichment opportunities and community based activities are good for residential learners but more limited for those who live at home and attend daily.
12. The college has developed outstanding partnership arrangements with an extensive range of organisations. This has led to significantly improved outcomes for learners including, greater access to medical and personal support agencies, a broader range of provision with opportunities to study at local colleges, and to gain work experience placements and job opportunities.
13. Support for learners is good. Highly effective pre-entry and induction processes enable learners to settle quickly into college. The provision for speech and language therapy has greatly increased since the last inspection. Clear communication structures effectively link the college with the residential homes to provide continuity of support sensitive to individual needs. Personal support is good. However the new system to collate and involve the learners in reviewing progress towards their long term goals is yet to fully embed and is still being inconsistently implemented and managed.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

14. The principal, senior leaders and trustees provide good leadership and clear strategic direction for the college. Learners' needs and well-being are placed at the heart of the college's culture and are prioritised through all the college's strategic planning processes. Managers and staff set high expectations for their learners and help to effectively raise individual aspirations. Ambitious goals are set at a whole college level and achieved.
15. Quality assurance arrangements are now mostly good. The observation of teaching and learning is well considered and effective. Improved quality monitoring has led to improvements in assessment, individual learners' target setting, and better learner support structures. The use of data is more widespread and is used well to track learners' achievements and provide a clear overview of performance by different groups of learners. The self-assessment

process is well established and is effective in securing improvement over time. In some areas of the college's work, the systematic monitoring of impact against actions taken, are less effective and some inconsistency remains.

16. The college has significantly increased its engagement with learners. Learner views are more regularly sought and contribute appropriately to the college's review of its provision and performance. All learners are increasingly encouraged to express their views openly. The college responds well to learners' views and suggestions but does not always formally record the actions taken, often missing opportunities to share with all learners what has been achieved as a result of their feedback. Appropriate arrangements are in place to gather the views of parents, staff and other agencies. However, the college does not yet systematically collect the views of onsite and offsite employers to contribute to its self-assessment.
17. The arrangements for the safeguarding of all learners are good. College staff and onsite employers receive an enhanced check to ensure their suitability to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Procedures for workshop activities are well considered and ensure learners are able to work safely with often highly technical, industry standard equipment. Staff receive regular updated training in safeguarding matters.
18. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall. The promotion of disability is particularly good. The college is highly inclusive and promotes a positive culture of understanding the individual differences amongst its learners. Most learners show a high degree of respect for the environment, their tutors and their peers. The college has worked hard to successfully raise the profile of equality and diversity since the last inspection and to meet its legislative duties. The college's equality and diversity working group now regularly involves student contribution. However, plans covering all three sister colleges and actions to actively promote equalities are not always sufficiently specific, explicit or systematic enough to measure impact across all equality strands or identify patterns of potential concern. The promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum takes place; however the college recognises further work is required to evaluate this effectively to ensure greater consistency. There is good representation of gender, ethnicity and disability amongst staff and a representative profile of gender and ethnicity on the board of trustees. However, the college has yet to analyse participation by job role to determine if representation is balanced across all levels of the organisation.
19. The college trustees bring a wealth of experience to their role and are highly committed to the work and ethos of the college. The quality of specialist resources is high. The standard of overall accommodation is satisfactory. The college's approach to workforce reforms is generally good. However, the basic skills team possess limited subject specialist qualifications in literacy and numeracy. The college's commitment to managing its resources in a sustainable way is good. The college provides good value for money.

Information about the inspection

20. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's head of education, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
21. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Glasshouse College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	85	51	34
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners			
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2		
Quality of provision	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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