

# Freeman College

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 132002

Name of lead inspector: Kath Smith HMI

Last day of inspection: 20 May 2010

Type of provider: Independent Specialist College

Address: Sterling Works  
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## Information about the provider

1. Freeman College is part of the Ruskin Mill Further Education Trust (RMET) and was established as a separate college in September 2005. It is now firmly established in the city location of Sheffield. The college's guiding principles have been inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, William Morris and John Ruskin, which includes an holistic approach to all aspects of education through arts, crafts, commerce, agriculture, nutrition, living skills and environment.
2. The college currently has 67 students; six are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are 15 female students and 52 male students. Of the total number of students, 42 are day and 25 are residential. The college caters for young people with complex needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities associated with developmental delay and challenging, or extremely vulnerable behaviour. Most learners participate in a three year RMET Ruskin Mill Orientation Course (RMOC). The curriculum aims to enhance learners' confidence and self-esteem, personal and social skills, improve their communication, literacy and numeracy, living skills, vocational skills, gain qualifications and access to future employment or a residential placement.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Foundation learning	29 full-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	35 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	1
Equality and diversity	3

## Overall effectiveness

3. The college's overall effectiveness is good with some outstanding features. The college has good capacity to improve further. It has made good progress with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The college has maintained good outcomes for learners whilst expanding and developing provision. Self-assessment processes now involve all staff and successfully identify areas for improvement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The college recognises that the implementation of individual learning targets within all curriculum activities is an area for improvement. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum, but are inconsistently applied and ineffective where planning for learning does not take account of individual learners' levels of ability. Learners benefit from highly individualised learning programmes and the wide range of activities on offer to enable them to achieve their long term goals. Partnership working with other organisations and employers is highly successful at providing more opportunities for learners to progress onto purposeful destinations. Care, support and guidance are good. Learners feel well supported by staff and have access to a variety of support services and therapeutic support and guidance. Safeguarding is particularly strong and learners report that they feel safe and have confidence that issues of concern are dealt with quickly. The college have a strong focus on providing a safe, secure and well managed learning environment. Leaders and managers are very effective in their roles and provide a strong strategic vision, underpinned by an ethos clearly focused on providing for the needs of learners with complex needs. Trustees discharge their duties well and staff feel well supported and valued. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The college actively seeks the views of learners. However, it does not collate

nor use sufficiently the information about the initiatives designed to enhance responses to equality and diversity in order to evaluate their impact.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. They achieve a good range of qualifications in vocational skills and personal development and progress well into further, higher education, training and employment. They develop a very good understanding of work-related skills including health and safety practices.
- Learners make good progress in their personal development and social skills. They feel safe and improve their health and well being by learning to manage their anxieties and behaviour. They gain in confidence and self-esteem which enable them to make a significant contribution in the wider community.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In better sessions learning is planned and well matched to individual learners' levels of ability. Tutors are good at instructing learners in craft and practical activities and in managing behaviour which hampers learning.
- Sessions are planned less well when not enough focus is given to learners' individual learning objectives and where literacy and numeracy skills are not integrated into sessions effectively.
- In their evaluations of the quality of what they see in sessions, college observers focus insufficiently on the learning taking place. They also miss opportunities to comment on how well equality and diversity and safe working practices are promoted.
- Learners benefit from the many craft- and work-based and practical activities on offer to make good progress towards their long-term goals. The extensive range of enrichment activities provides an holistic, coherent and highly individualised learning programme.
- The provision for literacy and numeracy is less well developed and not fully embedded across the curriculum.
- Partnership working with local groups, other organisations, employers and agencies is outstanding and highly beneficial to learners, widening opportunities and enhancing their vocational skills and personal development.
- Care, guidance and support are very effective. Learners have high levels of therapeutic support and specialist advice and guidance which enable them to succeed in their learning.
- Leaders and managers are very effective in their roles and provide good leadership and direction to ensure that the college's highly individualised and holistic approach to education and training is successfully adopted and implemented by all staff. Trustees provide very effective critical support and discharge their legislative duties well.
- Safeguarding is a particular strength of the college. Policies and procedures are robust and are successfully implemented. The college has strong links with the

local safeguarding board and is highly regarded for its work and expertise in this area.

- Equality and diversity are satisfactory overall. The college effectively meets its statutory obligations. However, the evaluation of actions taken to improve the promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped.
- The college responds very effectively to learners' views. Self-assessment is good and identifies areas for improvement. However, although quality improvements are effectively monitored, evidence to support how well the college's actions are impacting on outcomes for learners is not collated, and key performance targets are not sufficiently used to identify progress.

What does Freeman College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tasks and activities match individual learners' levels of ability by integrating individual learning targets more effectively within sessions.
- Improve the progress made by learners in literacy and numeracy by improving the skills of staff so that these skills are integrated in relevant and meaningful ways into all activities and within residential independence training, with due regard to individual learners' levels of ability.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that observers give more focus to the learning taking place in sessions and that tutors are therefore clearer about what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that information to support quality improvement and equality and diversity action plans is collated and used effectively to enable the college to track the progress being made towards key performance targets linked to learner outcomes.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- meeting new friends
- making gains in confidence
- help in getting a job
- the calm atmosphere
- all the enrichment and extended curriculum activities they can take part in
- having more freedom than living with parents
- learning how to cook, clean and wash their own clothes
- the outdoor pursuits
- really good staff
- feeling safe in the friendly atmosphere
- learning to manage behaviour.

What learners would like to see improved:

- lack of meat to eat at college
- uncertainty about what is going to happen in residences.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

4. The college has improved its provision significantly since the last inspection and has taken effective action to tackle areas for improvement. The management structure has been strengthened, ably supported by a highly committed board of trustees. The college sets high standards based on a deep understanding of the needs of learners with complex needs. Good outcomes for learners have been maintained and staff at all levels contribute very effectively to the college's continuous improvement. The college has a clear vision; self assessment is good and identifies key areas for improvement. The views of learners are actively sought and used to improve provision. Resources are of a high standard, financial management and oversight are sound and value for money is good.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

5. Outcomes for learners are good. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of learners. Learners make good progress in all aspects of their learning programmes. The vast majority of them achieve a range of appropriate externally accredited vocational and personal development qualifications. In addition, almost half of all learners gain literacy and numeracy qualifications. Attendance is very good and retention at 98% is excellent. Learners make good progress onto meaningful and appropriate destinations. In 2008/09, 79% of learners moved into higher education, further education, open or voluntary employment and independent living. Learners develop good practical skills in an extensive range of vocational areas including spoon forging, felting, jewellery, weaving and land work. The standard of work they produce is very good.
6. Learners enjoy their studies, gain in self-esteem and greatly improve their personal and social skills. Learners demonstrate significantly improved behaviour and levels of confidence. They develop clear insight into their own behaviour and personal development and learn to interact much more effectively with those around them.
7. A whole range of work-related skills are very effectively developed by learners which support their good progression onto further learning and employment. Learners feel safe in college and demonstrate high levels of awareness of safe working practices in workshops, on the farm and in all land-based activities. Learners understand and can discuss the reasons for safety procedures. They develop a good understanding of their health and well-being. All the college food is organic and learners are actively involved in the selection of menus and the development of cookery skills.
8. Learners have an excellent understanding and make a highly significant contribution to the community in which they live and work. They are involved in

an extensive programme of community and fund-raising events. They also develop insight into community services and facilities through opportunities for work experience and voluntary work with a range of local organisations.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

9. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In better sessions tutors demonstrate extensive knowledge and draw on their experience and skills to give clear instructions and directions to learners to complete tasks. In many sessions, tutors use their own vocational experience to illustrate key points and give emphasis to the employability skills developed during sessions. The finished items motivate and inspire learners and the quality of work produced is often to a professional standard. Specialist resources, across a breadth of vocational areas, are excellent.
10. Learning is less evident where the session plans are brief, and do not link sufficiently to individual targets. Learners make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills in sessions where these are successfully integrated within practical activities. However, these skills are not always developed adequately when individual learners' levels of ability are not taken into account in the planning of sessions. The process for observing teaching and learning has improved, but too much focus is given by observers to the teaching rather than to the learning taking place in sessions. Opportunities are missed to identify and evaluate how well equality and diversity and safe working practices are promoted in sessions
11. Procedures for initial assessment are thorough and information is used well to set individual learning targets within Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). Progress is recorded but, in many cases, this identifies activities completed rather than the learning achieved. The college has recognised this as an area for further development and has appointed a team of 'student journey' managers to support and guide learners and monitor their progress on a weekly basis.
12. A wide ranging curriculum at different levels successfully supports the strong college emphasis on personal growth, independence and the development of transferable skills through practical activity in a wide range of crafts. Skills for independent living are developed in college and in residences, although literacy, numeracy and communication skills are not yet fully embedded. An extensive range of enrichment activities includes outdoor pursuits and involvement in community events and social outings. A good range of opportunities for work experience plays a significant part in the development of personal growth and preparation for inclusion in the wider community. The college successfully negotiates individual pathways with learners and transition arrangements are soundly based on long-term goals identified, with guided support, towards a range of destinations.
13. The college has developed outstanding partnership arrangements with a wide range of organisations to enhance and promote further opportunities for learners. The college works very closely with the local authority, health services



and local colleges in developing provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. It also co-operates by providing expertise and training for safeguarding and support for those with additional support needs. It has very effective links with a range of local businesses to widen opportunities for work experience and develop sustainable employment. For example, the college is developing a local garden centre to provide on-going commercial and sustainable opportunities for employment.

14. Care, support and guidance are good. Good initial assessments are sufficiently detailed to ensure that good arrangements to support learners are quickly implemented. 'Student journey' managers provide a high standard of pastoral support and therapy teams work cooperatively to support emotional and relationship aspects. Staff are well skilled in managing the challenging behaviour and complex needs that many learners present. Transition arrangements are good and are closely linked to learners' ILPs.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

15. Leaders and managers are highly successful at ensuring that the ethos and values which underpin the educational and training provision are successfully adopted and implemented by all staff. Improvements to the management structure by strengthening and devolving more responsibility to middle managers have given more ownership for the quality of provision to staff teams. Appraisals are successfully linked to the outcomes of lesson observations and actions to tackle areas for improvement are agreed and closely monitored. Staff are very positive about the support they receive from managers and the wide range of opportunities afforded to them for their development and training. Good staff teamwork and very good communication between staff and across college provision enable information to be shared so that individual learners' needs are quickly met to enable them to make good progress in their learning and personal development.
16. The profile of the college has been significantly raised within the city. It is recognised for the significant contribution it makes to specialist provision within the locality. The college has responded well to national and local priorities and is working with a local college to provide for young people not in education, employment or training. It has been actively involved in supporting the development of assessment processes used by the local authority for the placement of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into appropriate provision on leaving school.
17. Self-assessment is good and the 2008/09 report is largely accurate. It clearly identifies areas for improvement linked to the annual development plan. The college generates extensive data and information on the improvement initiatives and actions it is taking to improve the quality of provision. However, this information is insufficiently concise and not always used sufficiently to support the judgements contained within the 2008/09 self-assessment report. Quality assurance and the monitoring and evaluation of provision are comprehensive, but not linked well enough to the self-assessment and quality improvement

cycles. The quality improvement plan does not contain sufficient key performance targets to measure the impact of the actions taken on outcomes for learners. Trustees play a highly effective role in ensuring that the college continues to improve the quality of its provision. They bring a wide range of expertise and use this to good effect. Individual trustees focus on and oversee particular aspects of provision and provide challenge to leaders and managers where needed. They play an active role in developing the provision in line with strategic objectives and key priorities.

18. Safeguarding is outstanding. The college fully complies with current legislation. Processes for staff recruitment are rigorous and records are held on a central register. All staff have received training and senior managers have undergone advanced refresher courses arranged by the local authority. The college's expertise within safeguarding is drawn upon to provide training to other agencies. It has developed strong links with the local safeguarding board and support agencies to ensure that incidents are dealt with quickly whilst providing excellent support to learners. Policies and procedures are robust and students know who to go to if they feel unsafe. Learners are able to develop their independence and social skills within a highly effective risk-managed learning environment.
19. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted overall. The college effectively meets its statutory duties in relation to equality and diversity. The college has a good range of activities to raise cultural awareness and successful links are made with local minority ethnic community groups and organisations. Since the beginning of the academic year, the college has implemented initiatives to improve the promotion of equality and diversity. An equality and diversity committee has been formed and a co-ordinator has been appointed. Tutors have very recently self-assessed how well equality and diversity are promoted within teaching and learning. However, the results of this initiative have yet to be incorporated into the equality and diversity action plan. The plan does not include targets to evaluate the impact of actions taken on improvements to the provision or outcomes for learners.
20. The college responds very effectively to learners' feedback and the strategy for involving learners is successfully implemented. Learners' views are sought through surveys and their individual learning plans and activities are arranged with their full involvement. Resources are managed well and the college provides good value for money. The college has a strong focus on sustainability and the best and efficient use of resources. However, staff skills and expertise in planning for teaching and learning are underdeveloped. The college recognises this and is investing in sponsoring and arranging relevant qualifications for a significant number of staff, including those who support learners in sessions.

## Information about the inspection

21. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Head of Education and Therapy, 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.
22. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed at the request of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Freeman 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			
Full-time learners	67	30	37
Part-time learners	0	0	0
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?	1		
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2		
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	1		
Quality of provision	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
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		
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	2		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1		
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?	2		
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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