

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Professor Linda Drew  
Chief Executive and Director  
Ravensbourne  
6 Penrose Way  
London  
SE10 0EW

Dear Professor Drew

### **Short inspection of Ravensbourne**

Following the short inspection on 6 and 7 December 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in December 2012.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Since your previous inspection, leaders and managers have worked effectively to ensure that your staff continue to offer a high standard of training and education for young people in arts-based subjects. Managers have successfully rectified many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

At the time of the previous inspection, Ravensbourne had only relatively recently relocated from Kent to Greenwich. You and your team continued to manage the transition well, and have successfully developed very strong and beneficial links, both in the Greenwich and wider London communities, for example with London Economic Action Partnership, and London-based employers. This has extended opportunities for students to work more extensively with employers from the creative industries. You successfully exploit the benefits of the institution's location, with more far-reaching transport links and an increased catchment area. As a result, you have a more culturally diverse student population.

Students benefit from the 'incubation centre' at Ravensbourne, where they have the opportunity, from time to time, to work alongside young entrepreneurs and new business start-ups. Your staff also ensure that students have the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from the rich cultural opportunities that exist across London, for example from visits to galleries and exhibitions, and from frequent inputs from employers working in the cultural industries.

Since the previous inspection, staff have made changes to how they use and

manage the open-plan nature of the building. These changes have created a more appropriate environment in which students can work and learn more effectively, without the distractions that tended to be a feature at the time of the previous inspection.

Your students are committed to their courses. They work conscientiously, and express their confidence and enthusiasm for the experiences and opportunities that are available to them at Ravensbourne.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors maintain a strong focus on safeguarding to help assure the welfare of students and staff. Students feel safe around the institution; they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when travelling around London, when studying at the institution, and when using the internet. The designated safeguarding lead takes swift action in the event of a safeguarding referral. Staff provide appropriate support for students where required. Leaders and governors have fully integrated their response to the 'Prevent' duty alongside the safeguarding procedures. Students and staff receive a comprehensive briefing on these at induction. Pre-foundation students interviewed during the inspection could not always remember the guidance they received at induction on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

### **Inspection findings**

- The new senior team has revised the strategic plan, which now places an increased emphasis on promoting academic excellence, valuing staff, enhancing the student experience and strengthening both internal and external partnerships. This new approach is helping to raise Ravensbourne's profile in the community. Further education continues to be a valued component to the provision, alongside the extensive range of higher education courses. Leaders have made several strategic changes to enhance the further education curriculum. They have successfully introduced a new access to higher education course and introduced a new strand to the foundation course in fashion promotion. Student numbers are high on these courses. Students speak positively and enthusiastically about the new courses. The new provision complements existing elements of the further education programme.
- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students who successfully complete their qualifications has remained high. On the relatively new access course, the number of students who gain distinction grades has increased year on year and is high. On the foundation course, students on the fashion and textiles pathway achieve the highest proportion of high grades. Managers have identified that adults do not perform quite as well as students aged 16 to 18. The vast majority of students successfully progress to the next stage of their education and training. Managers have introduced a system to evaluate the progress of students relative to their qualifications on entry. This has enabled them to identify particular trends in performance, including the good progress made by students from a black and minority ethnic heritage, by female students

and by those students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Managers have developed suitable processes to evaluate the quality of provision through course review and self-assessment. They use this information well to identify priorities for improvement. All staff play an active role in reviewing the performance of the courses. Students also provide valuable feedback on their perceptions of the courses. Managers draw up clear quality improvement action plans. For example, they identified the slight dip in outcomes for students on the media production pathway and are taking action to raise standards on this course. Occasionally, managers are not sufficiently self-critical when evaluating the quality of provision. Governors recognise and acknowledge that there is scope for more critical self-reflection from managers to sharpen quality improvement priorities.
- Managers accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, through lesson observations and performance review. They use information from these processes to design a programme of ongoing professional development for staff. For example, managers have recently identified that the quality of teachers' target-setting and the level of detail provided in feedback to students are not always consistent. They have set this as a key theme for future training activities.
- Managers use information from quality review and lesson observations to help devise a range of valuable staff development activities. These include events such as training, coaching and team teaching. Staff readily participate in, and value, these activities. Managers have identified key themes to help raise the quality of teaching and learning. For example, they have provided training on how to manage large student groups effectively, how to make use of information learning technology (ILT) well in lessons, and how to ensure that students reflect on their progress regularly. The positive impact of this training was evident during inspection. For example, teachers and students made particularly good use of ILT in lessons to record and share their ideas with other members of the group, helping them expand their evaluative skills and technical vocabulary. Leaders are strongly committed to investing in and developing staff. For example, several teachers are currently taking teaching qualifications or Masters-level programmes.
- Students praise the open and creative culture of the institution. They explain how the culture 'allows you to be who you want to be'. Students express their thoughts and feelings well through their project work, while exploring aspects of equality, diversity and safeguarding. They demonstrate a mature approach to the presentation of often quite difficult subject matter. Students produce an extensive range of creative projects, which draws on their wide and varied interests and celebrates the diversity of Ravensbourne's community. For example, student projects have explored themes such as the depletion of the African textiles industry, female genital mutilation, the risks of gun violence, and maintaining long-distance relationships. These projects help students extend their understanding and appreciation of the diverse society, and explore what it means to be British.

## **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders should ensure that:

- teachers create suitable opportunities, following the induction programme, to reinforce to students procedures around safeguarding and 'Prevent', so that students know what to do if they have any concerns
- they evaluate why there is a gap in performance between adults and students aged 16 to 18, and endeavour to redress the balance
- they are more critical and evaluative when self-assessing the quality of provision, and that they encourage governors to provide a higher level of support and challenge when reviewing quality
- they put in place suitable measures to raise standards on the media production pathway of the foundation programme, to ensure that these students achieve as well as those on other pathways
- staff development activities over the forthcoming months focus in particular on the quality of teachers' target-setting and the level of detail they provide in feedback, to help raise the quality of these aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will also be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Nelson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector visited the provider for two days. The Associate Dean for further education, as nominee, assisted the inspection team. Inspectors spoke with governors, senior leaders, managers, teachers and students. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed students' work. They also reviewed key policies and documents, including those related to self-assessment, quality improvement, performance management and safeguarding.