

# Inspection of Employ My Ability (EMA) Ltd

Inspection dates:

19 to 21 September 2023

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Provision for learners with high needs

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Employ My Ability (EMA) Ltd is an independent specialist college that provides study programmes to 50 learners with high needs, all of whom have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. EMA provides training that helps students to be independent and successful in their lives and in their work.

EMA primarily focuses on providing the vocational skills needed for jobs in hospitality and catering, horticulture and animal care. EMA trains learners at campuses that are open to the public and operates a café and garden centre. Most learners are based at its main site in Moreton and a few learners are based at its training site in Gillingham.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Students value learning in an environment that they describe as inclusive and supportive. They feel safe and well cared for. All students say that their uniqueness is celebrated.

Students have positive attitudes towards their learning and work. They arrive on time for lessons and benefit from swift support when they find learning more challenging. Therapists support tutors well to help students at these times.

Most students participate in meaningful work experience. Students enjoy working in the onsite outlets, such as the café, to practice the skills they are learning. As a result, many demonstrate high levels of customer service and technical skills. Students benefit from carefully planned vocational learning that helps them to put into practice the skills they have learned. For example, in land-based learning, students learn about the classifications of plants before using this knowledge during work experience.

Students receive appropriate careers education and visit local employers to help them to explore jobs within their chosen sectors. For example, hospitality students visit a cookery school and a Keralan restaurant, which helps them to broaden their knowledge of cuisine. Students have helpful meetings to discuss what they wish to do after college and to plan this transition.

Students learn about topics such as healthy living and healthy relationships that enable them to develop their skills for adulthood.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and managers have worked effectively with stakeholders to review the curriculum. Students now follow clearly defined pathways to employment and adulthood. Leaders and managers have considered carefully what students need to learn and included units of study that they feel best prepare students for adulthood and that reflect the skills that employers need. For example, students learn work skills such as health and safety and their rights as an employee, and independent living skills such as cooking and travelling more independently.

Tutors plan and teach vocational learning well. They identify the specific skills and knowledge that students need and teach them in different contexts. However, leaders and managers have not ensured that tutors use the outcomes in students' EHC plans well to plan what individual students learn. Leaders and tutors are unable to identify accurately the progress that students make because they do not know what students already know and can do in relation to these outcomes.

Tutors have not ensured that all students feel sufficiently challenged in their learning or are working at the pace they are capable of. A minority of students say that they feel the needs of other students impact negatively on their learning. Leaders and

managers have recognised this and recently made some adjustments to classes; however, it is too early to judge the impact of this.

Tutors use assessment well in the vocational and core subjects. They select assessment methods that enable students to demonstrate their knowledge to the best of their ability and to link theory to practice. For example, students use what they have learned about scale and measurement in mathematics to make smoothies.

Leaders and managers have responded in a thoughtful way to the weaknesses identified at the previous monitoring visit. They have recognised rightly that improvements in collecting and analysing information were required to help them to improve the quality of education.

However, leaders and managers do not yet have a good enough understanding of the quality of education and therefore do not use this to inform accurately the professional development that teachers need. Leaders and managers have introduced new quality assurance procedures. These activities are beginning to inform leaders and managers of the quality of education that students receive but have not had time to have a significant impact.

Leaders and managers have ensured that teachers and support staff have completed helpful training in topics such as autism, signing and supporting positive behaviour. These help staff to interact and communicate effectively with students and enable them to learn the curriculum more effectively. However, leaders and managers have not ensured that teachers have received sufficient professional development that helps them to develop their pedagogical knowledge and improve teaching. As a result, improvements in teaching are slowed.

Trustees, supported by a trustee advisory board, have a broad understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. However, this is focused more on operations and finance than the quality of education. Trustees are heavily involved in the operations of the college, which gives them an understanding of specific students and staff. However, they do not always check the accuracy of the information that they are presented with by leaders, and as a result cannot confidently ensure that they meet their legal duties and responsibilities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Minor improvements are needed. Leaders had not ensured that all the requirements for safer recruitment were in place at the time of the inspection and that the single central record was accurate.

Leaders have recognised that they must ensure that they have greater oversight of safer recruitment processes and that they scrutinize records regularly and

thoroughly. At the time of inspection, amendments were made to the safeguarding policy and safer recruitment processes to ensure that these requirements are met.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders must ensure that tutors use students' EHC plans to design the curriculum so that students gain the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to progress to their next steps.
- Leaders must ensure that staff have the expertise and pedagogical skills they need so that learners achieve their full potential.
- Leaders and trustees must ensure that safer recruitment processes are effective to keep learners safe.
- Leaders need to improve governance arrangements so that trustees provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge to leaders and hold them to account for the college's safeguarding arrangements.

## Provider details

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Unique reference number      | 145149   |
| Address                      | The Walled Garden<br>Moreton<br>Dorchester<br>Dorset<br>DT2 8RH            |
| Contact number               | 01929 405685   |
| Website                      | <a href="http://www.employmyability.org.uk">www.employmyability.org.uk</a> |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | James Dunham   |
| Provider type                | Independent specialist college   |
| Date of previous inspection  | Not previously inspected   |
| Main subcontractors          | None   |

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of education, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff, and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

|                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Esther Williams, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Louise Rowley                   | Ofsted Inspector |
| Hannah Staddon                  | Ofsted Inspector |

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