

Short inspection of The Mount Camphill Community Ltd

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

The Mount Camphill Community Ltd continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

The Mount Camphill Community (The Mount) is located near Wadhurst in East Sussex. It provides learning programmes for learners with moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All learners are in receipt of high-needs funding. At the time of the inspection, there were 18 learners enrolled, nearly all of whom were adults. Learners study individualised programmes around core themes of creative crafts, movement and independent living. A relatively small number of learners study accredited programmes in English, mathematics and vocational subjects such as cookery and land-based studies. Most learners live in residential accommodation on site, with a small number travelling to the college each day. The Mount was last inspected in January 2018 when inspectors judged the quality of the provision to be good. The Mount does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Most learners thrive during their time at The Mount. Many have faced challenges in their education previously, and they greatly benefit from the welcoming, calm and nurturing environment staff create. Learners develop positive and supportive relationships with their peers quickly, helping each other to complete tasks while acquiring essential personal and social skills successfully.

Learners study enthusiastically the broad and rich curriculum that leaders have created. They relish gaining new skills in subjects such as weaving, gardening, pottery and bakery, as well as acquiring essential knowledge in English and mathematics.

Learners benefit greatly from the high-quality resources that staff use skilfully to support teaching activities. For example, in bakery, learners use commercial standard equipment to make sourdough bread that they sell in the local community. Consequently, learners acquire substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours and, where relevant, pass their qualifications.

Learners participate in a comprehensive work experience programme. Initially, they fulfil roles in areas such as the kitchen, laundry and garden in the college. As their skills and confidence grow, many learners then progress to external placements carefully selected to meet their needs and interests. For instance, working in local garden centres or at a reptile rescue centre. As a result, learners apply their learning in workplace settings, consolidating their skills and enhancing the behaviours valued by employers.

Learners feel safe at The Mount. They benefit from staff who know their needs and vulnerabilities exceptionally well and who are vigilant for changes in learners' behaviour. Learners are kept safe by staff who take swift and appropriate action when issues arise.

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

Staff carefully assess what learners know and can do when they begin their programme. They use this information to plan programmes that enable learners to build on their existing abilities and work successfully towards achieving the outcomes in their education, health and care plans (EHC plan). As a result, learners follow programmes that are closely aligned to their needs and aspirations, enabling them to participate fully in learning and produce work to a high standard.

Tutors order learning sensibly and logically. Learners initially acquire confidence in the fundamental skills and knowledge of a subject before progressing to more challenging tasks. For instance, in weaving, learners initially make simple weaves using thicker thread. They then apply this learning by weaving complex patterns, using delicate threads that require fine motor skills, dexterity and patience. Learners are able to remember key learning and apply it confidently.

Tutors are skilled experts in their subjects. They create interesting learning activities, adapting their approach to enable learners to participate in learning. For instance, they use Makaton to help learners express their ideas. As a result, most learners participate in lessons well. In a small number of cases, teachers do not sufficiently challenge and support the most able learners. Consequently, these learners occasionally lose focus, which slows their progress.

Tutors work closely with support staff to enable learners to work independently, as far as they are able. Therefore, learners achieve greater independence, acquiring a new sense of self-belief that prepares them for life after college well. Where learners disengage from learning, staff intervene swiftly to support them to rejoin learning successfully.

Most tutors use technology effectively to help learners develop new skills and knowledge and complete tasks independently. For instance, tutors use text to speech applications on mobile phones to help learners communicate with confidence when in the community. However, tutors do not use technology across the

curriculum consistently. As a result, a small number of learners do not use digital technology sufficiently well to aid their learning and achieve greater independence.

Staff set learners targets relevant to each aspect of their programme and these contribute to learners achieving the outcomes in their EHC plans successfully. Staff check what learners know and can do carefully. They monitor learners' progress closely and take prompt action when learners fall behind that helps them catch up quickly. As a result, most learners achieve their targets well and are justly proud of the progress they make.

Leaders have recently provided learners with individual advice and guidance from a qualified careers adviser. Staff support learners to participate in these discussions effectively, and consequently, learners now have a better understanding of the next steps available to them. Leaders rightly recognise that learners need to have access to careers advice and guidance throughout their programme and especially as they prepare to leave the Mount.

Leaders coordinate specialist support services well. They employ speech and language and occupational therapists, so learners have plentiful access to helpful support. For instance, speech and language therapists work with tutors to use carefully selected questioning techniques to fully establish what learners know and can do. This information is then used to inform future teaching activities. Leaders work closely with other external support services, such as physiotherapists, to fully meet learners' needs. Consequently, learners have access to the specialist support that enables them to grow and develop, achieving greater independence and resilience.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They use this knowledge to provide staff development activities that are effective and well received by staff. For example, leaders support tutors to use verbal questioning to check learners' understanding in depth. Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, leaders have refocused their energy on sustaining and further improving standards. As a result, the issues identified in the previous inspection have largely been addressed and learners continue to benefit from high-quality teaching.

Trustees use their relevant skills and expertise to support and challenge leaders effectively. They ensure that the Mount meets its statutory responsibilities. Trustees challenge leaders to sustain standards and make further improvements successfully. For example, following the pandemic, they questioned leaders about their pace of responsiveness to known weaknesses. Consequently, leaders took decisive action and significant progress has now been made towards addressing these issues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Provide further opportunities for learners to access impartial careers advice and guidance so that they are best supported to make well-informed decisions regarding their next steps after college.
- Challenge and support the most able learners so they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Further develop learners' use of technology to aid their learning and to help them gain greater independence.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131923
Address	Faircrouch Lane Wadhurst East Sussex TN5 6PT
Contact number	01892782025
Website	www.mountcamphill.org
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Cathy Hall
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since The Mount Camphill Community Ltd was judged to be good in July 2014.

The inspection team was assisted by the coordinator 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

Roland White, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Josie Grainger	Ofsted Inspector
Daniel Beale	His Majesty's Inspector

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