

Employ My Ability (EMA) Ltd

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number:	145149
Name of lead inspector:	Lowenna Bradley, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent specialist college
Address:	The Walled Garden Moreton Dorchester Dorset DT2 8RH

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Employ My Ability (EMA) Ltd was inspected in September 2023. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

EMA is an independent specialist college that provides study programmes for 51 students 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 their work. The college primarily focuses on providing the vocational skills students need for jobs in hospitality and catering, horticulture and animal care. EMA trains students at campuses that are open to the public and operates a café and garden centre. Most students are based at its main site in Moreton, and a few students are based at its training site in Gillingham.

Themes

What progress has been made in using students' EHC plans to plan the curriculum and teach the knowledge, skills and behaviours students need to progress to their next steps?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have involved employers in developing the curriculum so that it has the relevant content needed for employment in areas such as hospitality, catering and horticulture. Leaders and managers have carefully considered the planned outcomes from the EHC plans for the cohort of students. They match these effectively to the technical and practical skills to be taught. They provide students with useful opportunities to practise their skills. For example, students develop their communication skills when taking part in a variety of hospitality roles. However, leaders and managers have not yet ensured that the curriculum content and specific targets are personalised for each student. They rightly recognise that this is a priority and have plans to introduce this in the next academic year.

Leaders and managers have recently started to check what students know and can do more thoroughly, at the start of their learning. This is to enable staff to track the progress that students make in their learning more clearly and to ensure that students' targets remain ambitious. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this.

Most teachers set each student helpful targets during lessons. These targets link well to the outcomes in the student's EHC plan. For example, in speech and language therapy lessons students learn about assertive behaviours, why they are important

and how to respond appropriately. However, a small minority of students do not understand what they are trying to achieve because the targets are too broad. Leaders and managers rightly recognise the need to ensure that targets are used and monitored effectively by staff in long-term planning, as well as in individual lessons.

What progress has been made in improving staff's teaching skills to support students to achieve their full potential?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have improved the training they offer to staff to develop their teaching skills. They support tutors to gain level 4 and level 5 qualifications in teaching and offer level 3 training to learning support workers. This enables staff to know more about a range of teaching techniques that support students in learning. However, the training offered to staff to support teaching knowledge and skills, including whole-staff training, is often generic and does not relate well enough to the special educational needs of the students they teach.

Leaders are creating a culture of sharing ideas in the staff teams and utilising expertise more effectively. This is helping to develop a greater understanding of how staff work as a team to support the students to achieve their potential. For example, leaders and managers utilise the expertise of speech and language therapists to provide a range of staff with annual training on effective questioning techniques. Staff reflect positively on how this has improved their practice in phrasing their questions more clearly and recognising when students have not understood.

Many staff are well motivated to complete additional training. Leaders and managers support them well with the time and resources to undertake the training they find and request for themselves. For example, tutors have requested training to improve their mathematics teaching. This has led to the introduction of the pre-teaching of mathematical vocabulary to students. However, leaders and managers do not yet have a strategic or coordinated approach to ensuring that all staff get the specific training that they need to improve their teaching practice. Leaders do not yet use activities such as lesson observations and learning walks to provide staff with useful developmental feedback on the quality of teaching. This does not yet inform future planning for the whole staff team or individual staff training.

What progress has been made to ensure that safer recruitment processes are effective?

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have significantly improved the processes for the safer recruitment of staff. Trustees have successfully raised the importance of safer recruitment procedures throughout the organisation. They have given the designated safeguarding lead the necessary authority to make final recruitment decisions. Leaders have put thorough checks in place for all documentation relating to safer recruitment. They ensure that no staff start work on site without the correct checks in place, with no exceptions. Leaders have updated their policies and follow all

requirements and recommendations from relevant legislation. They keep thorough records to ensure all processes and procedures are followed accurately.

What progress has been made to ensure that those responsible for governance scrutinise and challenge safeguarding arrangements effectively? **Reasonable progress**

Trustees have rightly recognised the need for greater separation between trustees and senior staff to enable strategic oversight. Trustees have made improvements to reporting structures and meetings to enable them to provide senior staff with increased scrutiny and challenge. Trustees have undertaken governance-specific training in safeguarding and in equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure they understand and fulfil their legal and statutory responsibilities for governance.

Trustees have appointed an experienced and impartial external adviser as part of their education advisory committee. This offers an added layer of scrutiny for safeguarding and has provided leaders, managers and trustees with appropriate assurances on their safeguarding arrangements.

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