

The Mount Camphill Community

Inspection report

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 – outstanding*
- *grade 2 – good*
- *grade 3 – satisfactory*
- *grade 4 – inadequate*

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body; and where appropriate the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits or quality monitoring inspection; and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:

- overall effectiveness of the organisation and its capacity to improve further
- achievement and standards
- quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. The Mount Camphill Community (The Mount) is an independent specialist college that provides further education (FE) and training for residential and day learners aged 16 to 25. The Mount is part of the Camphill Movement, founded in 1940 to create communities in which vulnerable children and young adults can learn and work in a mutually supportive environment. The Camphill organisation is inspired by Christian ideals as articulated by Rudolf Steiner, and is based on the acceptance of the spiritual uniqueness of each human being, regardless of religious or racial background. The Mount is staffed by residential co-workers and day staff. The senior co-workers live in The Mount and most take on the role of house co-ordinators and team leaders; some are also tutors.

The trainee co-workers are volunteers from a wide range of countries and usually work at The Mount for one year.

2. The Mount is located in Wadhurst, East Sussex and is a registered education charity, limited by guarantee. Four house communities on the site provide residential accommodation for learners. Within the campus there are craft workshops for estate and rural skills, horticulture, pottery, weaving, woodwork, cookery and catering. The village of Wadhurst is within walking distance and provides opportunities for shopping and social events. Tunbridge Wells is within easy reach by train and is used for leisure and entertainment, as well as providing further opportunities to develop independent living skills.
3. Currently there are 33 learners, all except two of whom are residential. Thirty learners are funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) with five of the learners receiving joint funding by local authority social services departments. The remaining learners are fully funded by social services. Of the current learners, 16 are female, 3 are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 50% are aged 16 to 18 years of age. All learners have significant learning difficulties and a few have additional disabilities, including communication difficulties.
4. The aim of The Mount is 'to develop individual abilities both in terms of outer practical skills and as a path of learning towards the realisation of responsibility, motivation and independence'.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
<i>Equality of opportunity</i>	<i>Good: Contributory grade 2</i>

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. This is a good college. Achievement and success rates are good overall. All learners who are entered for externally accredited qualifications relating to their craft courses are successful in achieving them. The standard of learners' practical work is outstanding and particularly well evidenced in portfolios. Progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Destinations of learners are satisfactory with most progressing into supported living arrangements. Retention and attendance are good.
6. Teaching and learning are good. Tasks are designed to develop each individual through real activities. Teachers are well qualified in Steiner specialisms but too few hold appropriate teacher qualified status. However, staff are particularly skilled at helping learners with their social, communication and independence skills. Specialist accommodation and equipment for teaching are excellent. Individual literacy teaching is good but staff are not sufficiently trained in developing and supporting literacy and numeracy across all areas. Initial and baseline assessments and recording of progress against targets are good.
7. The Mount's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners and educational and social inclusion is good. The curriculum provides a very good range of practical courses and activities through a rich range of arts-based activities. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity underpins all The Mount's activities and it fulfils its responsibilities under equality and diversity legislation. Opportunities for appropriate external accreditation have been significantly developed. Arrangements for work experience though are limited.
8. Support and guidance for learners are good overall and outstanding for personal and therapeutic support. The Steiner related therapists work extremely well together to support the holistic development of learners. Pre-entry information, induction, tutorial and mentoring arrangements provide excellent personal support. The transition programme is not fully developed. Learners do not have direct access to careers resources.
9. Leadership and management are good. The Mount's management group leads and manages the provision very well. The trustees, who make up the Council of Management, work very effectively with The Mount's staff. Quality assurance arrangements are robust with regular monitoring of the quality improvement plan. Self-assessment is critical and leads to improvements. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Comprehensive procedures are in place to promote the safety, well-being and protection of learners. Arrangements for training and development of staff are satisfactory overall but there are insufficient opportunities for updating staff on equality and diversity issues and for supporting learners' literacy and numeracy needs. Links with other providers are still being developed.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The Mount shows a good capacity to improve. The quality improvement framework is comprehensive and is applied across all areas of The Mount's work. The effective leadership from the management group and the expertise of the trustees ensure a firm focus on improving quality, raising achievements and developing the full potential of every student. The self-assessment report is good and accurately identifies the areas for improvement although strengths are understated.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

11. The Mount has made good progress in addressing key issues from the last inspection. Baseline assessment is used well to establish the most important areas for learning. The monitoring and recording of learners' progress are good. The Mount has implemented its literacy strategy and increased significantly the range of nationally recognised awards. The range of work experience has increased but further development is needed.

Key strengths

- good development of learners' practical, personal and social skills
- good teaching and learning
- rich and varied curriculum
- good support and guidance
- very effective management
- good promotion of equality and diversity.

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- the insufficiency of work experience opportunities
- improvements to the transition programme
- the development of staff to support literacy and numeracy
- the formal arrangements for student feedback.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

12. Achievement is good overall. Inspectors agreed with their self-assessment that since the last inspection The Mount has introduced a wide range of externally accredited units covering eight craft areas. Many have been developed specifically to meet the interests and skills of their learners. The majority of the units of study are at entry level but with progression routes to levels 1 and 2. For 2006/07, all learners achieved the qualification they were entered for.
13. Learners' standards of practical work are outstanding. Clearly evidenced examples of work produced show an in depth understanding of the project or task learners are engaged in from start to completion. For example, very good use of photographic and written evidence was used for one learner working on a tapestry wall hanging masterpiece. It was clearly evidenced to show the excellent progress made. Learners develop personal and social skills very well.
14. Learners make satisfactory progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. All learners are set clear targets which are regularly monitored. Progress is reinforced during enrichment activities such as during trips to the local town, dealing with travel arrangements, money management for bus tickets and cinema tickets and ordering meals in restaurants.
15. Destinations of learners are satisfactory. Of the nine learners who left The Mount at end of 2006/07, eight progressed into supported living. Three learners are also attending their local further education college with the remainder continuing with therapeutic craft work.
16. Retention and attendance are good with 100% retention for 2006/07. Any attendance or punctuality issues are dealt with promptly and appropriately by tutors and/or house parents.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

17. Teaching and learning are good. Inspectors broadly agreed with the findings of The Mount's teaching and learning observations. Learners are involved in real activities and tasks which contribute to the life of the community as well as developing their own skills. They learn to make bread for their households, plant and harvest vegetables, and weave fabrics. Others design and make stools, tables or fire-irons. Learners on pottery courses dig and process their own clay for tableware and garden ornaments. Tasks are individually designed to develop each learner's skills at an appropriate level. Teachers are skilled at helping learners with social interactions and communications and with developing independence skills. Individual literacy teaching by an experienced specialist teacher is good. Materials are contextualised to learners' college courses and to their own lives.

18. Resources are excellent. The college has specialist accommodation and equipment for each of the craft areas. Learners live in well designed homes. Comfortable, simply decorated rooms reflect the ethos of the community. Permanent staff are well qualified in Steiner specialisms. However, too few staff are qualified teachers at level 4. Staff are not sufficiently trained in developing and supporting literacy and numeracy.
19. Initial and baseline assessments and recording of progress against targets are good. Records of progress in specific vocational skills, communications, social interactions and independence give a clear picture of learners' development. Effective reviews are held twice yearly and lead to detailed and helpful reports. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is thorough. Literacy targets are clear, achievable and referenced to the core curriculum. However, workshop staff are not equally skilled at recording regular progress. Numeracy targets are sometimes too broad. Recording of progress in some aspects of work in houses is unsatisfactory.
20. The curriculum to develop learners' practical, artistic and physical potentials is very good. A foundation year with a broad range of craft activities is well designed to develop social and communication skills. In their second year, learners choose a specialist workshop with embedded literacy and numeracy. The Mount acknowledges in its self-assessment report that links with employers require further development. At the present time too few learners undertake work experience.
21. The college provides a rich range of arts-based activities for all learners. All learners undertake some specific physical or therapeutic exercise daily and are engaged in physically demanding college courses. A good range of extension activities runs throughout the week that enriches learners' experience. However, swimming is not available for all learners. Female learners do not have sufficient opportunities for games and sports.
22. Support and guidance for learners are good overall and outstanding for personal and therapeutic support. Steiner related therapies support learners' holistic development extremely well. Excellent personal support begins with very effective pre-entry information for learners, parents and carers. The learner handbook contains detailed information on courses and life at The Mount, including the student charter, complaints procedure and a statement of student rights. Parents and carers receive a separate handbook. They attend open days that provide good opportunities to communicate with staff, and workshop events assist them in gaining a better understanding of the work and ethos of The Mount. Induction arrangements effectively assist learners to settle quickly into college life. The regular tutorial and mentoring arrangements support learners' personal and emotional development very well.
23. The Mount acknowledges that transition arrangements require further improvement. Whilst planning for transition is satisfactory in preparing learners to move into supported living arrangements, there are limited opportunities for learners to explore further training and employment opportunities. Although satisfactory links have been made with the local Connexions partnership, there

are no direct careers resources available for learners to explore careers independently.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Contributory grades:

Equality of opportunity

Good: Grade 2

24. Leadership and management are good and are judged accurately within the self-assessment report. The management group lead and manage The Mount very well. They maintain a good overview of the provision through their meetings and through good strategic planning. They have developed the provision to meet the changing needs of the student population whilst still maintaining their unique ethos and approach to education. Communications are very good. There is a wide range of meetings which involve all the staff and which enable them to contribute their ideas for improving the student experience.
25. The Mount has a very effective Council of Management. The council is made up of nine trustees with a wide range of expertise. The meetings are carefully structured to ensure salient reports come to the council throughout the year. Trustees focus sharply on relevant issues, providing support when needed but also challenge when they feel initiatives need more research and analysis.
26. There is a good focus on quality improvement. The quality improvement plan is regularly monitored. The focus on quality improvement led to the development this year of a faculty for education and the embedding of literacy and numeracy into the whole of the students' experience.
27. The Mount's internal observation of teaching and learning scheme is good. Tutors are observed once a year by an appraiser of their own choice and reports discussed with the tutor. Issues for further development identified in the reports are discussed in full team meetings and best practice is shared. There have been a small number of observations by an external observer but these have not covered all staff or areas of the curriculum.
28. Staff development and training is satisfactory overall. Recent training includes sense training which is central to The Mount's approach to education. Training to develop a deeper understanding of autism is planned for this term. Trainee co-workers all take an external qualification at level 2. However, there has not been any recent training in equality and diversity and few staff have had training in supporting learners with their literacy and numeracy needs.
29. Feedback from parents and carers is formally collected through the use of a comprehensive questionnaire. Appropriate action is taken if issues are raised. However, there are no formal arrangements for learners to contribute to decision making within The Mount. Learners meet weekly with staff but these meetings focus on the sharing of information about changes to timetables and forthcoming events. This was identified at the last inspection.

30. Links with other providers are still in the early stages of development. Some links have been made with other independent specialist colleges and The Mount is liaising with local further education colleges but few of the learners currently benefit from the links.
31. Health and safety has a high profile in the college and risk assessments are in place for all activities undertaken by the learners. Resources are very efficiently deployed and financial management is good. The college provides good value for money.
32. The self-assessment report is largely accurate but understates the strengths of The Mount.
33. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The Mount's equal opportunity policy is detailed and covers all relevant legislation. The strong ethos of The Mount contributes significantly to the very positive way in which all learners and staff are valued and treated. However, learners are often inappropriately referred to as boys and girls, or sometimes men and girls. The use of co-workers from a wide range of nationalities brings a broad multi-cultural dimension to the work with learners. The Mount meets its responsibilities with regard to safeguards and has satisfactory policies and procedures for the protection of young children and vulnerable adults. The legislative requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2002 (SENDA) and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 are comprehensively met. All the equality policies have action plans attached but some are incomplete or not very detailed. This area for improvement was identified in the self-assessment report.