

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Pennine Camphill Community
Date of visit: 7 April 2009

Context

Pennine Camphill Community is a residential independent specialist college. It provides further education and training for learners aged 16 to 25 who have learning difficulties. The college is part of the Association of Camphill Communities. It is based on a 38 acre site which includes five community houses, craft workshops, classrooms, a hall, market garden, farm and riding school. There are 35 learners, mainly aged 19 or over and funded through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Some staff are volunteers who live and work at the college. The principal holds his position by nomination from the senior management team and the trustees. The Pennine Camphill Community is a registered charity.

The college was inspected in 2007 and its overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were satisfactory. The main areas for improvement were target-setting, especially for the most able students; underdevelopment of students' information technology (IT) skills; lack of differentiation in the foundation programme for new students; insufficient opportunities for external work placement; underdeveloped support for communication; and inconsistent implementation of quality assurance systems. A monitoring visit in 2008 found reasonable progress in most of these areas; there was insufficient progress in implementing quality assurance systems.

Achievement and standards

What progress has the college made to ensure the most able students achieve to their full potential?	Reasonable progress
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Target-setting has improved further since the 2008 monitoring visit. All students now have a small number of core targets that are linked more appropriately to their individual strengths and potential. These targets now form the basis of the individual learning plan (ILP), against which progress is measured at regular intervals. Students are more involved in target-setting and monitoring. A greater emphasis is placed on stretching the more able students, including more opportunities to gain external accreditation than at the time of the inspection. For example, 10 students are now taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and other forms of accreditation are also used, where appropriate. Students spoken to during the monitoring visit were able to identify progress they had made in a range of skills, including confidence to

do things for themselves, practical skills, communication and IT skills. Students working towards NVQs or other forms of accreditation are enjoying the challenge and have a good understanding of work undertaken.

What progress has been made in preparing learners to meet their long term goals? How successful are learners in progressing to these?	Reasonable progress
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The college gives appropriate emphasis to transition planning and many students achieve their goals. In 2007/08 most leavers moved into supported living and are involved in work placements, including voluntary work. Since the inspection, the college has improved access to external work placements for students. This is now an integral part of students' programmes and helps them to develop work related skills. Increased emphasis is placed on developing students' confidence and ability to work independently on placements where appropriate. Managers are aware of the need to extend further the range of placements available. A small number of students have extended transition plans to help them settle into their new life and examples exist of the college maintaining contact after a student has left to offer continued support.

Quality of provision

What further progress has the college made since the last monitoring visit in developing an effective communication strategy for students?	Reasonable progress
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The college continues to develop its work on communication skills to improve learning and to enable students to take part in decision making. A speech and language therapist (SaLT) works with the college for two days a week. The SaLT is involved in all initial assessments and works with staff to draw up a communication strategy for individual students. This is monitored to judge its effectiveness. The proportion of staff that are confident in the use of Makaton is increasing. The SaLT is involved in staff training events and staff are becoming more aware of the range of strategies to aid communication and how a combination of these can be used to meet the needs of individual students.

Leadership and management

At the 2008 monitoring visit the college had not made sufficient progress in the development of quality assurance procedures. What further progress has been made since the visit?	Insufficient progress
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The college has made limited further progress since the monitoring visit. Overall it has been slow to address the issue raised at the 2007 inspection and inconsistencies

remain in the application of quality assurance procedures. There are procedures in place and the trustees are involved to a much greater extent in monitoring the work of the college than at the time of the inspection. There is a lesson observation scheme in place, a staff appraisal system and arrangements to collect the views of stakeholders. The college is on track to ensure all its staff have appropriate teaching qualifications by 2010. However, there is not yet a clear system of responsibilities and accountability and the quality assurance system is too dependent on a small number of key managers. For example, lesson observations took place in the autumn term but those scheduled for the spring term did not take place due to the temporary absence of a manager. Documentation is not always completed by staff or, when completed, is not submitted on time to allow review reports to be comprehensive. It is not always clear how judgements in the self-assessment report have been arrived at. In order to address this, the college has decided on a fundamental review of roles and responsibilities, which is to be completed by July with a view to implementing a new structure by September 2009. As part of this, a human resources group is in place with a clear remit which includes linking lesson observations into performance review and personal development plans. The college is linked more closely into appropriate external organisations than at the time of the inspection, for example other colleges are involved in the lesson observation and moderation process. Staff have visited other colleges to look at good practice and Pennine Camphill is taking part in a project involving the national association for specialist colleges (NATSPEC) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) which is aimed at self-improvement within the independent specialist college sector.

What progress has been made in measuring the impact of policies and procedures for equality and diversity?	Reasonable progress
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The college now measures the progress made by students from different backgrounds and by gender and has found no significant differences. Diversity is encouraged and celebrated within the range of activities taking place within the formal curriculum and in enrichment activities. The international background of some volunteers is used well to promote students' understanding of different cultures. The college is aware that it needs to carry out further work to evaluate fully the impact of its policies and procedures to promote equality and diversity.