

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of College: The Mount Camphill Community
Date of visit: 3 July 2007

This feedback contains brief findings from the annual assessment visit. It focuses on the themes explored during the visit and does not attempt to give a comprehensive overview of the college's performance.

Achievement and standards

How well are learners' achieving their open college network (OCN) units?

- Learners are achieving units of OCN very well. The community has developed a wide range, currently 300, of externally accredited units covering eight different craft areas. Units are selected to suit the interests and skills of individual learners. The majority of the units of study are at entry level but with progression routes to levels 1 and 2. Last year 25 learners completed 68 units in total; 55 at entry level; 12 at level 1 and one at level 2. This year the rate has increased with 30 learners completing 105 units; 90 at entry level; 13 level 1 and two at level 2.

What is the rate of learners' progress into employment or further education programmes?

- A small number of learners progress into supported employment. Learners are not progressing into open employment or onto courses at local colleges of further education. The opportunities for progression to a more independent life at other supported living and learning environments has fallen over the past two years. The number of learners returning to their family home without further training or employment has increased in the past year.

Quality of education and training

At the last annual assessment visit (AAV), literacy, numeracy and communication skills were still being developed. How effective is the initial and ongoing assessment of functional literacy and numeracy and how well are learners now being supported to develop these skills?

- Literacy and numeracy provision has improved since the last AAV. A full time literacy and numeracy tutor has been appointed and provides individual tuition for learners as well as support for staff. Recent initial assessment reports provide a detailed analysis of learners' skills levels. The tutor works closely with other staff to agree the most appropriate programme of support for each learner. Measurable, small step literacy and numeracy targets are identified within individual learning plans (ILPs). However, targets recorded within term plans are too general. Recent ILPs include strategies to develop literacy and numeracy skills within practical workshops and in other activities. This is at an early stage of development. The range of resources has improved with an increased range of resources for young adults and better use made of appropriate information learning technology (ILT) resources.

Ongoing assessment of progress was not judged to be rigorous at the last inspection. How has this been developed?

- Term plans have been revised to provide opportunities to comment on learners' progress. However, the recording of progress remains weak. Records often describe activities and do not focus sufficiently on the skills that learners' have gained. For example, 'needs guidance', 'finished' 'doing well'.

How well has the work experience part of learners' programmes developed as part of transition arrangements?

- The community is working hard to secure external work experience placements and opportunities for learners have increased this year. Learners have completed local placements in a café, a shop and on an organic farm. Learners continue to complete a three week block placement in another Camphill community setting during their third year.

However, learners have insufficient opportunities to experience a range of work placements during the later part of their time at the community.

Leadership and management

At the last AAV it was recognised that the management group had responsibility to monitor the work of other formal groups but this had not yet been implemented. How has this been developed?

- The management group uses the quality improvement plan as its focus for monitoring all the community's groups. Links between the management group and other college groups often involve the same members of staff. This assists very well with the flow of communications between all staff. Developments for the next academic year involve the creation of an education group which will focus on educational aspects of the provision.

Are risk assessments now in place for all learners' activities?

- Risk assessments are in place for all workshops and for individual learners when appropriate, for example, when undertaking forge work and estate and rural skills. All learners have an individual risk assessment which records potential risks against each area of their programme; that is, health, house, workshop, emotional and outings. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and updated if necessary at each learner review meeting.

How effective is the peer appraisal and external teaching observation scheme in raising the quality of the experience for learners?

- The college has good links with other camphill colleges with reciprocal arrangements in place for external teaching and learning observations. A useful summary of findings is collated and fed back to the college who then produce an action plan that clearly records any issues raised, such as the recording of learners' progress. There are clearly documented procedures and criteria for the established peer appraisal system. A summary of findings is submitted to the council.

How has the community addressed the insufficiency of specific disabilities training for staff that was recognised in the last AAV?

- There is good attention to providing information on learners' disabilities through a student profile when they enrol. The community has now collated a file of information on a range of disabilities which is available in each house. A range of events for new staff and to refresh the knowledge of other staff is provided each year. These include sharing of information from a parent on fragile x syndrome and the college doctor has provided awareness training on issues surrounding epilepsy.