

The Mount Camphill Community

**Inspection of FEFC-funded provision in
non-sector establishments for students with
learning difficulties and/or disabilities**

January 2000

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-2000**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to secure provision for individual students in England with learning difficulties and/or disabilities where sector provision is inadequate. When it exercises this duty, the Council makes a contract with the establishment making the provision. The contract includes the right of inspection.

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in Council Circulars 97/12 and 97/22. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and other aspects of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 - good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 - less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses*

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Summary

Independent Establishment 13/2000

Inspection of FEFC-Funded Provision in the non-sector establishment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The Mount Camphill Community Wadhurst, East Sussex

Inspected January 2000

The Mount Camphill Community in Wadhurst, East Sussex provides residential further education for young people between 16 and 25 years of age who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Most also have learning difficulties. The aims of the college are based on the philosophical, educational and social principles of Rudolf Steiner. Currently, there are 32 students, of whom 13 are funded by the FEFC. The community does not provide for students with physical disabilities or mobility problems, severe sight or hearing loss or those needing nursing care.

The community provides a wide variety of learning opportunities and support services to meet the educational, cultural, physical and spiritual needs of students. The teaching is firmly based on a coherent philosophy of learning which ensures a consistent curriculum and respect for the students and which results in their successful education as confident and caring young adults. The college makes sound assessments of students' needs. Communication with

students about their progress is honest and helpful to their progress.

The underdeveloped formal quality assurance systems result in some variation in the quality of the provision. There is insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching, learning and recording and too little formal recording of students' progress and achievements. Some less effective long-established teaching methods need revision. Those aspects of students' programmes that should demonstrate how students' needs are to be met are not well developed.

The self-assessment process had been carried out thoroughly, and had included some lesson observations. The community found the process helpful and productive. Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths and weakness identified and with the overall evaluation of the quality of the provision.

The provision funded by the FEFC was judged to be satisfactory, with strengths and some weaknesses, and was awarded a grade 3.

Context

The Establishment and its Mission

1 The Mount Camphill Community is located in the small town of Wadhurst in East Sussex. It provides residential educational courses for young people from the age of 16 to 25 years with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Most have learning difficulties. The aims of the college are based on the philosophical, educational and social principles of Rudolf Steiner, in which curative education and social therapy support overall personal development. Subjects such as weaving, woodworking, pottery and gardening enable students to gain a range of skills and abilities for adult life.

2 The college is particularly effective in meeting the needs of young people who need further education provision in a sheltered community and who are not yet capable of benefiting from an FEFC sector college environment. Currently, there are 32 students, of whom 13 are funded by the FEFC. Most have behavioural and learning difficulties. The students have progressed from Steiner schools or from mainstream or special schools in their local areas. The community does not provide for students with physical disabilities or mobility problems, severe sight or hearing loss or those needing nursing care.

3 The community is run co-operatively by house parents, young co-workers, teachers and crafts people who work alongside the students. Students have access to psychological and psychiatric services, if necessary. An

anthroposophical doctor visits once a month and prescribes specialised therapy within the Steiner philosophy.

4 Residential accommodation and social activities are seen as integral to students' learning. Three houses are run to enable students to move, as their skills develop, into accommodation with less support. In Soltane House, where the most independent students live, students prepare their own breakfast and supper on most days and share in the preparation of meals at weekends when the group eat together. These students purchase food and care for the house. At the end of each college day students can choose to attend a lesson where they can learn and practise skills for leisure activities. Organised leisure activities take place on at least two evenings a week. Students organise their own activities on other evenings.

5 The community aims to provide a supportive environment in which guidance and support are continuously available to students from all community members. Students are encouraged to support each other and are part of the arrangements which enable the whole community to contribute to the control of difficult behaviour.

6 Since the previous inspection, the community has discontinued its upper school programme and replaced it with a more active college foundation year. Students may then progress to a three-year college course, each year of which has its own aims. A fifth transition year is provided for students, where appropriate.

Context

The Inspection

7 The inspection was carried out over three days by two inspectors. They observed 18 lessons. Discussions took place with co-workers, staff and students. Evening activities were inspected and visits were made to the college's residential accommodation to evaluate its contribution to students' learning and independent living skills. Students' files, college documentation and a range of evidence of students' achievements were also examined.

The Curriculum

Grade profile of lessons observed

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Number of lessons	3	5	8	2	0

8 The table above shows the grades given to the lessons inspected. Of the lessons inspected eight were rated good or outstanding. Two lessons were less than satisfactory, and this proportion is higher than the national average of 6% for all colleges inspected as recorded in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*.

9 Students have individual programmes designed around their needs and interests. The programmes include learning in one of the residential settings, according to their level of independence and emotional needs. The ways in which the needs of the student will be met through the programme are not always stated with sufficient clarity. The learning programmes include a wide range of enrichment activities ranging from a choice of daily hobby sessions to the celebration of Christian festivals. These strengths were recognised in the self-assessment report.

10 Most lessons extend students' skills and sustain their interest. In an outstanding singing lesson, a group of students, some with severe learning difficulties, successfully learned to co-operate and follow instructions through singing a

Gregorian chant. Students learn skills through weaving, pottery, woodwork and horticulture which give them pride in themselves and prepare them for a more successful working life. Much of the teaching uses traditional methods that have been developed within Camphill communities. Although this is often satisfactory, there is little exciting or innovative teaching or evidence of staff reviewing the effectiveness of the methods used. The strengths of the teaching were pointed out in the self-assessment report. The weaknesses were not clearly identified.

11 Staff provide clear and helpful feedback to students on the progress they are making towards their learning goals. For example, a written report is addressed to each student at the end of each year which identifies the student's strengths, weaknesses and the achievement of their learning goals. The report also contains an appreciation of the contribution the student has made to the life of the community. This report is produced following discussions with the student and all the staff who work with the student. However, there is insufficient recorded evidence of the students' progress that would allow their progress to be measured over time.

The Curriculum

12 Inspectors agreed that the students are generally successful in achieving their learning goals, which include pre-vocational qualifications, where these are appropriate. In particular, students achieve increased independence skills and develop as confident and caring young adults. This strength was not sufficiently emphasised in the self-assessment report. In the last few years, most leavers have moved on to Camphill provision for adults rather than into open employment or independent living. Part of the planning for the transition from the community involves residential work experience at a Camphill establishment to help students make choices about their future.

Other Aspects of Provision

13 The Mount Camphill Community is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. There is a council of management of 10 which meets three or four times a year. It has legal responsibility for all aspects of the community. The council delegates the day-to-day management of the college to a group of permanent residents of the community, who meet as the Camphill Meeting. The Camphill Meeting has particular concern for a range of aspects of community life including:

- the education, care and welfare of students
- students' admission and future placements
- future planning and development.

14 The community provides a supportive environment within which guidance and support are given continuously. Support is available to students from all community members. Students also support each other and are part of a structure which enables all to contribute to the control of difficult behaviour. The value of this approach was not given sufficient weight in the self-assessment report.

15 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that quality assurance arrangements are underdeveloped and that the community has few formal arrangements to monitor the quality of its work. Although in community meetings there is a focus on personal and professional development in which analytical discussion and evaluation take place, the lack of a formal system prevents consistent monitoring of the

quality of teaching. There is also insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching, learning and recording. Some initial work has been carried out on quality assurance. The system used to produce the self-assessment report included an opportunity for all students and staff to contribute their views through discussion and questionnaires. Staff had found this provided them with useful information. Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths and weakness identified and with the overall evaluation of the quality of the provision.

16 The community has contact with other Camphill communities, particularly through staff training and some joint work. Local links enhance the students' learning and their development as young adults. Staff work jointly with social workers, specialist careers officers and other agencies which provide support for students to ensure that the students' needs are met. Work with parents is a particular strength of this aspect of the community's work.

17 Policy statements with regard to accidents, admission, student protection, complaints, discipline, health and safety including missing persons, pastoral care, sexual behaviour and smoking, alcohol and abuse are all in place.

18 Permanent co-workers are recruited and trained within the Camphill movement. Appointments are made according to procedures set out in the staff manual. There is very little movement of permanent staff. Young co-workers, who usually join the community for one or two years, are

Other Aspects of Provision

recruited through other Camphill or Rudolf Steiner contacts or from national volunteer organisations in a range of European countries.

19 The students benefit from extensive facilities. The buildings are well maintained and provide a comprehensive range of resources for study, recreation and the development of independent living skills. There is some lack of attention to detail on health and safety in some areas of the college. The inspectors agreed with the college self-assessment report that health and safety issues are not given sufficient priority.

20 Students' living accommodation is of a high standard. Students are housed in large, light, airy rooms with attractive furniture. The use of accommodation is monitored effectively and in detail. The college rooms have careful and creative displays which encourage students' learning. Since the previous inspection the weavery has moved to a larger and more suitable room that is well equipped for traditional hand spinning and weaving. The woodwork shop is appropriately equipped with traditional hand tools and machinery. Other areas are equally well housed and equipped.

Conclusions

21 Key Strengths

- effective implementation of a coherent philosophy of learning
- successful education of students as confident and caring young adults
- sound assessment of students' needs
- a wide variety of learning opportunities and support services to meet the educational, cultural, physical and spiritual needs of students
- effective communication with students about their progress

22 Weaknesses

- underdeveloped formal quality assurance systems
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching, learning and recording
- inadequate formal recording of students' progress and achievements
- some less effective long-established teaching methods
- lack of clear statements in programmes about how students' needs are to be met