



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on
Aspris College South Wales

Unit 82

Glyndwr Road

Cwmbran

Torfaen

NP44 1QS

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by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Aspris College South Wales

Aspris College South Wales is an independent specialist college, which was established in 2010, when it was known as Priory College South Wales. It is based in Cwmbran. The college is administered by Aspris Children's Services, which is part of the portfolio of the Waterland group, a private equity investment company. The college offers day placements for young adults aged 16 to 25 years of age with Asperger syndrome, autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and associated conditions. There are currently 36 learners at the college. Nearly all learners come to the college from the local area. Around two thirds of learners access education exclusively at the college, and follow pre-entry to level 2 courses, including independent living skills. The other learners follow full-time courses at Coleg Gwent from a range of programmes from entry level through to higher education. All learners, irrespective of their main place of study, receive both in-class and additional support by Aspris College staff.

The college manager was appointed in 2017. She is supported by a team comprising one curriculum lead, two tutors, a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and around 20 learning support workers.

The college's last monitoring visit was in December 2019.

Inspectors' judgements on this limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 77 inspection.

Main findings

Strengths

Since the last monitoring visit, the college has faced considerable change and challenge including movement to a new site and the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time staff have been flexible in their approach towards meeting the needs of learners and offered assured support and stability to them. As a result, most learners have high levels of well-being and many make at least secure progress in their learning.

Nearly all learners build positive working relationships with staff and engage well in sessions. They follow well-established routines to complete tasks with increasing independence such as creating shopping lists, buying ingredients and making pastries as part of their life skills curriculum. Over time, many learners make strong progress in relation to their individual starting points. For example, in 2020-2021, information provided by the college shows that nearly all learners successfully completed relevant qualifications or accreditations.

In 2021, the college moved to new accommodation, which includes learning and well-being rooms, an information communication technology suite, teaching kitchen, a quiet room and clinical offices. This accommodation provides an engaging and inviting learning environment which meets the needs of learners particularly well. To compensate for a lack of outside space the college has also invested in a local allotment, which will allow learners access to education in an outdoor setting. However, this is in the early stages of development.

A notable feature of the college's new accommodation is a 'working cafe'. This highly beneficial resource offers learners valuable opportunities to complete work experience in a known environment that is open to the public. Learners are using this resource effectively to develop their social, food technology and financial management skills and understanding. They also usefully benefit from successfully completing food hygiene qualifications.

Areas for development

Staff at the college benefit from a range of helpful training opportunities in important areas such as safeguarding, autism, supporting learner behaviour and radicalisation. Further, leaders at the college have provided specific training to learning support staff about the expectations of their role. However, there are currently limited opportunities for staff to engage in wider professional learning opportunities that enhance their understanding of teaching and learning.

Recommendations

The college should:

- R1 Provide greater opportunities for staff to share and observe good practice in teaching

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes

The college has given a high priority to strengthening its self-evaluation and improvement planning processes.

Senior leaders collect a range of first-hand evidence including from learner progress reports, learning walks and session observations to evaluate its work. Learners also provide helpful suggestions to influence and improve the college's work, such as through the student council offering feedback on the revised break-times.

This combined evidence, together with other information and a robust and detailed analysis of performance data, provides senior leaders with a secure evidence base for understanding the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Further, the detailed information collected regularly about individual learners' progress is monitored robustly by staff, with suitable actions taken where appropriate. This successfully drives forward the college's work for improvement in learner performance.

R2. Track the progress that learners make after they leave the college

Since the last monitoring visit, leaders have implemented effective processes to track the progress that learners make after they leave the college. The college now contacts former learners on a regular basis to gather relevant destination information and, where appropriate, offer beneficial support with the aim of enabling these former learners to re-engage in education, employment or voluntary work. The range of placements learners progress to is broad, including further and higher education and voluntary positions such as at a local radio station.

This approach is further strengthened by the strong working relationship the college has with local partners including colleges of further education and employers. This context is particularly helpful for staff at the college to provide targeted interventions for those learners struggling during periods of transition. Leaders' evaluation shows this process is effective and, as a result, nearly all former learners are engaged in education, employment or voluntary work.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website (<https://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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