

A report on
Beechwood College

**Hays Road
Sully
Vale of Glamorgan
CF64 5SE**

Date of inspection: October 2025

by

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

About Beechwood College

Beechwood College is an independent specialist college and care home located in Sully, within the Vale of Glamorgan. It is operated by Beechwood Court Ltd, part of the Iris Care Group, under the ownership of Ancala Partners.

The college provides both day and residential placements for learners aged 16 and above who have learning disabilities and may also have needs associated with autistic spectrum conditions.

The principal leads a team of lecturers and learning support assistants and is responsible for the design and delivery of all educational and residential programmes. The strategic leadership team includes the principal, assistant principal, general manager, practice development lead and clinical lead.

There are currently 66 learners enrolled at the college, 54 men and 12 women. Of these, 34 learners are funded directly by the Welsh Government, while learners receive funding from social services and health authorities across a range of local authorities in England and Wales.

The college's most recent core inspection took place in March 2023, and the last monitoring visit took place in January 2024.

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

Main findings

Strengths

During their time at college, nearly all learners make secure improvements in their attendance and engagement in education. In sessions observed during this visit, nearly all learners demonstrated highly positive behaviours in line with their needs and abilities. Learners are motivated to learn and develop their skills.

Staff have established a calm and positive learning environment. They have a strong understanding of the individual needs and interests of learners. As positive role models they support learners to develop important social skills. As a result, learners are developing respectful and mutually supportive relationships with their peers.

Since the time of the last inspection, leaders have amended college-wide approaches to tracking pupil progress to capture a wider range of skills and to focus more sharply on the most relevant skills for individual learners. This is in the early stages of implementation.

The college has a strong focus on supporting learners to develop their independence and prepare for their future lives. For example, a few learners benefit from work experience placements in the community, which enables highly valuable skills development. Other learners develop these skills through on-site opportunities, such as through sessions on developing interview skills or through working at the college café or supporting the college's online shop.

There is strong collaborative working between education, residential and clinical staff to meet the wide range of learner needs at the college. All parts of the multidisciplinary team monitor the progress and needs of each learner. Clinical staff model effective practice for staff in areas such as communication and behaviour, they provide support in education sessions, support quality assurance processes and deliver beneficial professional learning sessions to the wider staff team.

Spotlight- Aspirational curriculum offer

The college has a flexible and aspirational approach to curriculum planning which meets the needs and interests of learners effectively. Learners are placed on different pathways to provide tailored learning experiences to match their needs and interests. The personal enrichment achievement curriculum supports learners who struggle to engage. Around half of learners benefit from options afternoons where they select their sessions from a wide offer including work skills, humanities, engineering, arts and crafts, multi-skills, outdoor education and hair and beauty. Learners value these opportunities to explore areas of interest and develop skills in areas which are important to them

Areas for development

Leaders have made beneficial changes to professional learning for staff supporting learners in education. This is beginning to improve the consistency of support, however, this remains too variable. Leaders have accurately identified this as an ongoing area of development for the college.

Recommendations

The college should:

- R1. Embed and review the effectiveness of professional learning on the quality of support for learners

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

Clarify the roles and responsibilities of classroom support staff to maximise their impact on learners' progress.

Classroom support in the college is provided by college Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), residential support workers (RSWs) whose primary role is in residential houses on the college site and RSWs employed in off-site residential settings owned by the wider organisation.

Leaders place a high value on the role of support staff and have prioritised professional learning for this group. The college has introduced a beneficial induction programme that is the same for LSAs and on site RSWs. However, off site RSWs do not benefit from these same opportunities as a result support for learners remains too variable.

LSAs undertake regular, short and targeted professional learning sessions. These are valued by support staff and provide the opportunity for sharing good practice internally.

LSAs demonstrate a suitable understanding of their roles, with some examples of strong practice in promoting learner well-being and engagement. LSAs and RSWs understand how to access personalised information to inform their understanding of learners' learning and wider support needs. They value the accessibility of information if they are required to work with new learners.

Support staff feel valued and well supported by leaders. They value the continuing professional development opportunities available.

Embed the newly established quality assurance processes and evaluate the impact on learning and well-being.

Since the time of the last inspection leaders have continued to embed quality assurance processes to drive improvement at the college. For example, leaders complete learning walks and lesson observations, attendance reviews, review the quality of individual learner targets and planning and review communication with parents.

Further, leaders have continued to place a high importance on embedding progress made towards previous recommendations, such as the governance structures in place to monitor and improve attendance, the establishment of the role of PHSE lead and the introduction of new assessment approaches.

As a result, college leaders have a clear vision for the college and have suitable plans in place to continue to drive improvement over the coming years, which links well to the learning and well-being needs of learners. However, in the short-term progress in this area has been impacted by staff absence.

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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