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August 2014

Dear Mr Jones

## **Estyn Annual Review of Performance report on Grŵp Llandrillo Menai**

Following the Annual Review of Performance visit to your institution on 4 to 6 June 2014, this letter forms an annual report based on the outcomes of that visit. The letter is published on the Estyn website.

Gill Sims HMI and Liam Kealy HMI evaluated the current performance of the institution and reviewed the progress made against the recommendations arising from earlier inspections.

The inspectors held discussions with the principal and senior managers, tutors, learners and members of the governing body. They scrutinised documentation, including evidence on the progress made against each of the previous inspection recommendations. They also considered the quality of teaching and learning through learning walks and scrutiny of the provider's observation process.

At the end of the visit, the inspectors reported their findings to the principal of the institution and other members of the senior leadership team.

### **Outcome of the link inspector visit**

#### **1 Outcomes and standards**

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai was formed in 2012 through a merger between Coleg Llandrillo and Coleg Menai. Coleg Llandrillo had previously merged with Coleg Merion Dwyfor in 2010. The performance data for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 is the merged data of Coleg Llandrillo and Coleg Menai.

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai has improved overall success rates across all courses by one percentage point over the last two years. However, the national comparator has

risen at a greater rate and the Grŵp has moved from above it to being in line with the national comparator between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. In the same period, completion rates across all courses have improved by two percentage points to be one percentage point above the national comparator. Although attainment rates across all courses have risen by one percentage point they have fallen from slightly above to being in line with national comparators. For completion and attainment across all courses the Grŵp is in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales.

Long courses represent 84% of the total enrolments in the Grŵp. A majority of subject sectors have improved their long course success rates between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. Land-based studies (agriculture, horticulture and animal care) is an important subject area for the Grŵp and success rates in this area are currently six percentage points above the national comparator. Success rates in engineering and manufacturing technologies improved by three percentage points between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 and have remained at seven percentage points above the national comparator to be the highest in the sector.

Long course success rates in construction, planning and the built environment, and in performing arts, have fallen over the last two years and remain below the national comparators. Successful completion in hospitality and catering has remained at 94% for the last two years and has remained above the national comparator. For this subject sector, the college remains in the top quarter of all colleges.

Completion rates on long courses have improved by three percentage points between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 to be one percentage point above national comparator and placing the college in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales. Most learners enrolled on long courses achieve their qualifications. Attainment across all subjects improved by two percentage points over the last two years and the college remains in the top half of all colleges.

Completion and attainment for short courses are above national comparators. Nearly all learners successfully complete their courses and the Grŵp is in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales.

## **2 Essential skills**

There are effective arrangements in place to improve the success rates of essential skills courses at sector subject area. The essential skills and quality teams work well together to identify courses with low outcomes and good use is made of performance panels to put recovery plans in place to improve success rates.

The Grŵp is working well to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of learners. All subject specialist staff are expected to complete training in essential skills awareness and support. As a result, they are better able to include the development of skills in their teaching and course design. The essential skills working group has introduced a common literacy marking scheme for staff to help learners improve the accuracy of their written work. The Grŵp has also introduced a literacy skills targets ladder to help staff set specific targets for individual learners at the appropriate level. Senior staff also evaluate the quality of essential skills delivery as a normal part of their observations of teaching and learning.

The Grŵp goes beyond the use of initial and diagnostic tests to assess learners' essential skills. During induction, a common task is set for learners and tutors provide feedback to them on their work. As a result, staff are better able to set specific and relevant targets for individual learners.

The Grŵp has a range of support available for learners to improve their essential skills, including one-to-one tuition, whole-class support and group work. Personal tutors monitor learners' progress towards achieving their essential skills targets on a regular basis. This involves learners presenting and discussing their work with their personal tutors.

The Grŵp merger has enabled learners in independent living skills (ILS) and learners with additional learning needs to experience a broader social curriculum. Teachers and programme leaders liaise well together across campuses to provide learners with opportunities to interact in a more varied range of social situations and with a wider range of learners. Examples include 200 learners visiting Portmeirion Village and these learners joining school pupils for the ILS Olympics in Rhos-on-Sea.

### **3 Teaching and assessment**

The Grŵp has effective policies and procedures to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and assessment across all campuses. Early after the merger of the colleges, there was extensive work to establish a common observation process. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and has contributed to the high outcomes for teaching recorded in the learner voice survey.

The creation of the new post of teaching and learning manager has had a positive impact on the quality assessment and led to improvements in teaching. Lesson observations are robust and the information from these is used well to inform actions on teachers' individual development plans and to identify areas for general staff development.

Teaching and learning mentors provide a supportive network for teachers to improve their practice. They offer advice and guidance and have an open policy for any teachers to observe their own classes. They work effectively as a team, and with the teaching and learning manager, to produce a well-structured programme of staff training events. These are planned, as relevant, at campus or whole Grŵp level. Most full-time teachers regularly attend the Grŵp training events.

In addition to in-house training, staff have very good opportunities to identify their own training needs and to access a wide range of opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD). Many staff spoken to during the visit have taken up useful opportunities to attend subject-specific seminars, vocational-sector training or to visit other institutions both in Wales and beyond to observe current practice.

The Grŵp identifies underperformance effectively and has robust systems in place to support staff to improve their practice.



## **4 Curriculum**

The Grŵp plans its curriculum very well to make sure that it meets the needs of learners, employers and the community. Senior managers make strategic use of labour market information at a regional and national level to ensure that learners gain the skills and qualifications needed for the workplace. Programme area managers and teaching staff generally have very strong links with the industries and sectors they work in. This means that they are able to include employer evaluations and contributions in course design and delivery.

The Grwp works well at a strategic level with the engineering and energy sectors. It is currently delivering a range of courses for major employers in these sectors. For example, it delivers bespoke training for staff from Scottish Power, RWE and Siemens. The Grŵp has developed an energy centre on its Llangefni site in partnership with the Welsh Government. Both Scottish Power and Hitachi have contributed significant resources to the curriculum at Llangefni, as have Magnox on the Dolgellau site and RWE at Llandrillo. The Grŵp also works well with the catering and hospitality sector to run a training academy on Anglesey and with the retail sector to run an academy in Rhyl. The Grŵp hosts the Wales culinary skills team on one of its campuses.

The curriculum and quality committees and programme area managers ensure consistency in the curriculum and plan progression for learners. As a result, courses are available to learners at the right level across the Grwp and learners can progress to higher levels of learning. Learners can clearly see the progression routes that lead from lower levels of learning, via apprenticeships and foundation degrees, to higher education. The Grŵp has worked well to ensure there is consistency in the awarding bodies for qualifications within subject sector areas.

## **5 Leadership and management**

The Grŵp's management team and governing body combine very well to set the strategic direction and priorities of the Grŵp. They provide strong support for regional strategic priorities, including economic and enterprise initiatives, local service board developments and 14-19 provision. This has resulted in effective partnership work with industries and schools in the area to develop the curriculum.

The governing body provides very strong support, significant challenge and a high level of expertise to the management team. It implements its role in setting the strategic direction of the Grŵp and oversees its governance very well. Governors have a very good understanding of the current performance of the Grŵp. They work well with the management and quality team to scrutinise outcomes and agree plans for improvement. The governing body is in a good position to meet the requirements of recent legislation.

The Grŵp has recently carried out a management restructure to strengthen its focus on the curriculum, to improve learner outcomes and consistency across campuses. The new structure, launched in June, has resulted in rationalisation in the number and size of programme areas and greater parity of responsibility and workload. The Grŵp has also reorganised a range of other services, including learner support

services, curriculum planning, quality and performance, and management and employer engagement, in order to increase support and challenge to curriculum area staff.

The Grŵp involves learners well in setting its strategic direction and bringing learners' issues to the attention of the governing body.

## **6 Leadership and management (quality assurance)**

The Grŵp has a strong focus on standards and performance. This drives improvements at curriculum area level and across campuses.

The Grŵp makes good use of data and data dashboards to analyse performance at curriculum area and main qualification levels. Commercial software is used well to help individual staff to track performance on their courses. Performance panels are effective in improving outcomes at course level and agreeing improvement plans.

The quality and curriculum groups work very well to improve consistency and quality, and to share data and good practice across campuses.

## **7 Summary on progress on previous inspection recommendations**

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai has worked well to review the progress made against the recommendations from the inspections of Coleg Llandrillo in 2005, Coleg Menai in 2005 and Coleg Meirion Dwyfor in 2007. All the recommendations have been met and the college has identified relevant areas for improvement and carried these forward to the current self-assessment report and quality development plan.

## **8 Other**

The Grŵp promotes collaboration in 14-19 provision across all counties well and frequently hosts cross-county meetings. The Grŵp has worked extensively throughout the period of the merger to ensure that learners in the area have maximum opportunities to access provision within the context of their local area and culture.

The 14-19 managers represent the Grŵp effectively at county meetings and have worked well with the local authorities to ensure that common timetables allow learners appropriate access to the full available curriculum. The grŵp 14-19 managers also work very well together across the campuses to share information and best practice.

There is an extensive choice of course options across the campuses, which provide learners with a broad range of learning opportunities and experiences. In the current year, 1,582 pupils aged 14 to 19 years, from schools across North Wales, are attending programmes at the college. Of these, 80% are between 14 and 16 years of age. Most learners following 14-19 programmes progress to full-time vocational or academic courses.

## **Learner voice**

The Grŵp has worked exceptionally well throughout the merger to ensure that the learner voice is heard. It uses a broad and effective range of methods for collecting learner views, listens carefully and responds promptly to learners' suggestions, queries and requests.

The learner portal has been extended this year. As well as tracking their individual learning plans, progress and assignments, learners make very effective use of the portal to express their views and in canvassing and voting for positions such as learner class representatives and the learner president roles.

The Grŵp makes extensive use of the learner portal to respond to issues raised by learners at course, department, campus and whole college level. This allows the Grŵp to explain the reasons for its decisions and to post answers to frequently asked questions. This has contributed to the positive outcomes in the learner voice report where nearly all responses are above the sector averages.

Three thousand, eight hundred and seventy-one learners in Grwp Llandrillo Menai completed the learner voice survey in 2014. Of these, 2,930 were full-time learners and 941 were part-time learners.

Forty-two per cent of the full-time learners rate their college as very good overall. This is seven percentage points above the sector average. A further 38% rate the college as good. Eighty-eight per cent of full-time learners state that their course was better than, or equal to, what they expected. This is one percentage point higher than the sector average.

Overall, learner responses against the four key themes are three to five percentage points higher than the sector averages. Teaching and training is the highest score at 47% and this is three percentage points above the sector average. A further 36% rate teaching and training as good.

Fifty-four per cent of learners say that the college is 'very good' at ensuring they feel safe and a further 37% say this is 'good'. No learners have rated the college as poor or very poor on this measure.

The higher scores in the learner voice questionnaire come from learners in Information and communication technology, retail and commercial enterprise and education and training. Engineering and manufacturing technologies and construction, planning and built environment have the lowest scores from the most significant numbers of responses.

Most learners say that they were offered the opportunity to learn through the medium of Welsh or bilingually when they started their courses.

## **Welsh language**

The Grŵp works well to reflect the Welsh language context of the area and the communities in which it works. It makes effective use of census information and data

from schools to predict and monitor the demand for Welsh medium education across the region. It is making good use of targets to monitor and increase the delivery of Welsh medium and bilingual learning and the level of Welsh medium assessment. Good use is made of the Welsh language scheme and action plan to establish current needs and to set actions and targets for improvement.

The Grŵp is working to support first-language Welsh speakers to undertake their learning and assessment in Welsh. It also gives good support to other learners to develop Welsh employability skills in priority subject areas.

Overall, almost half of the staff speak Welsh as a first language, including 40% of teaching staff. There is good support for teaching staff to improve their Welsh language skills. Many staff have taken part in the Welsh language sabbatical programme. The Grŵp works in partnership with Sgiliaith to help staff teach bilingually and this has been very helpful for staff who teach bilingual groups. The college has useful plans in place to recruit more Welsh speakers and to help other staff improve their Welsh language skills.

### **Recommendations**

In order to bring about the necessary improvements in a timely manner, the institution should:

- R1 Monitor and evaluate the impact of the new management structure
- R2 Monitor the planned improvement in underperforming curriculum areas, particularly in relation to the standards of skills

### **Next steps**

Gill Sims and Liam Kealy will continue to monitor overall progress through their link role with the institution.

Yours sincerely

**Lin Howells**  
Assistant Director