



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**North Wales Welsh for Adults Centre
College of Education and Lifelong Learning
Dean Street
Bangor
LL57 1UT**

Date of inspection: November 2011

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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Context

The North Wales Welsh for Adults Centre was established on 1 April 2006 as one of six regional centres established by the Welsh Government to lead the field.

The centre is responsible for the Welsh for Adults provision throughout north Wales, including Anglesey, Gwynedd (excluding Meirionnydd) and Conwy in the west, and Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham in the east. The region has a population of 608,592.

In 2006 the centre inherited 11 providers across North Wales. There are now only eight providers that serve the centre, as a result of the merger of Deeside and Llysfasi colleges and the merger of Llandrillo and Meirion Dwyfor Colleges. The centre abandoned agreements with Glyndŵr University for strategic reasons. The eight current providers are Bangor University, Popeth Cymraeg, Coleg Harlech / Workers' Education Association, Nant Gwrtheyrn, Coleg Llandrillo (including Coleg Meirion Dwyfor), Coleg Menai, Yale College and Deeside College (including Coleg Llysfasi). In addition to the formal partnership with the eight providers, the centre works in partnership with the large numbers of organisations and forums throughout north Wales.

Up until August 2011, the centre's management structure was different from the other leading Welsh for Adults centres as the management of the centre was separate from the provision. From the outset, there has been a close working relationship with the Welsh for Adults Unit at University of Wales Bangor in every aspect of its work. The centre was merged with the Unit following an academic review and consultation with the partners and the Welsh Government in August 2011. They were merged in order to ensure effective and logical management of Bangor University's provision and to ensure value for money.

The centre is responsible for provision, finance, data, quality, informal support, training and marketing, and ensuring basic provision through sub-contracting with providers across the region.

During 2009-2010, the centre had a total of 10,072 enrolments, which is an increase of 8% on the 2008-2009 numbers, and an increase of 20% on the situation in 2007-2008, when there were 8,390 enrolments, when the Centre's responsibility for Welsh for Adults began in the region. During the same period there was an increase in the number of individual learners that enrolled with the centre, from 5,657 in 2007-2008 to 6,238 in 2009-2010, which is an increase of 10%.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Excellent
The provider's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

North Wales Welsh for Adults Centre has some excellent features, including:

- a consistent increase in completion rates over the last three years, which is consistently higher than the completion rates of other regions in Wales;
- consistency of high quality teaching across the provision;
- wide and co-ordinated provision across the region at all levels, including at the higher levels;
- wide variety of informal learning opportunities across the provision;
- strong management and leadership at all levels,
- innovative and thorough quality assurance systems;
- a high quality self-evaluation system that listens to a wide range of stakeholders' opinions; and
- continuous professional development of a high standard that responds appropriately to tutors' needs.

Prospects for improvement

North Wales Welsh for Adults Centre has some excellent features, including:

- good and excellent standards that show consistent progress over the last three years throughout the region;
- provision that is rooted in thorough research that leads in its field;
- the way in which the centre has addressed underachievement successfully;
- clear and robust structures to ensure continuous improvement; and
- innovative plans to widen participation.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the centre needs to:

- R1 build on the good work to extend participation across the region;
- R2 ensure that learners receive clear feedback on their progress and the next steps in their learning; and
- R3 increase the use made by tutors of electronic resources during the lessons.

What happens next?

The centre will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The centre will be invited to prepare a written case study for Estyn, describing the excellent practice identified by the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

The standards of achievement of learners at the north Wales regional centre are excellent.

There has been consistent progress in the main performance indicators over the last three years and they are almost all above the results for Welsh for Adults centres in Wales. Learners' completion rates in the region have increased annually over the last three years. Learners' completion rates for one of the providers were low, but there is now an increasing improvement in those rates.

The number of learners in the region who sit WJEC examinations has risen by 20% over the last three years and a high percentage of learners who sit WJEC examinations achieve A or B grades. This is an excellent feature.

Seventy-four per cent of learners at the centre return to study another Welsh course, which is a considerable increase since 2007-2008.

The centre has a good range of evidence to analyse the differences between the performance of different groups of learners and this evidence is used effectively to raise standards. The evidence shows that the performance of men on the courses has improved over the last three years to be at the same level as the performance of women. The centre has also made a study of people's performance over 60 years old and no difference is seen in their performance across a range of courses. The centre has also conducted a study of how deprivation affects learners' progress and it is seen that learners across all levels of deprivation succeed well. The classroom observations confirm this.

Nearly all learners are making good progress in their learning in the lessons, and in a minority of classes are making excellent progress. They are all keen learners who are eager to contribute orally to every aspect of the lesson and are developing their language and communication skills through the medium of Welsh well, and sometimes in an excellent way. On the whole, almost all learners recall previously learnt forms, pronounce correctly and speak with increasing confidence according to their experience and the level of the class. The learners read correctly and understand the content of the text well. In a few classes, learners write extended stories of a high standard.

In a minority of classes, learners' progress is excellent. At the higher levels they all speak Welsh correctly and at length. They can also speak spontaneously and can hold an extended conversation in pairs and groups about the problems of the modern world. These learners have a wide range of vocabulary and they use the syntax of the language correctly. They also use Welsh in their everyday lives and in their work, wherever possible.

The independent learning skills of the majority of learners are good. They watch television programmes and use the internet to support their learning. A high proportion of learners take advantage of an excellent range of informal learning opportunities outside the classes in order to reinforce their communication skills. The centre and its partners offer a wide range of informal learning opportunities across north Wales. There, the learners practise their language skills and they benefit greatly from using their Welsh skills in a good variety of social situations.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Nearly all the learners feel safe and very happy in their learning environment and they are aware of the complaints procedures should a problem arise. All of the learners enjoy their learning very much, and show very high levels of motivation. They take an active part in the lessons. Most of them are extremely enthusiastic and have fun learning. Many have gained independent learning skills that help them to be part of the Welsh community.

Many learners show good perseverance and they work hard to reach their goal. They work together well and participate extremely well. They show each other respect and are very ready to help each other when necessary. They attend classes well and receive beneficial support from other learners when they miss lessons, in order to ensure that they complete the work.

Many learners make good use of electronic methods of keeping in touch with one another and this adds to the feeling of being part of a close and self-supporting community. Many learners make very considerable efforts to take responsibility for their learning by continuing with their studies outside the classroom, attending day-schools, summer schools and two-day courses.

Nearly every one of the learners is aware of the advantages of the excellent opportunities that are available to practise their Welsh and make good use of them, either in specific informal learning activities or by using Welsh naturally in their local communities. This helps them to assimilate better and strengthens the feeling that they are part of their local communities. They use 'Taith Iaith' well to promote use of Welsh outside the classroom,

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Excellent

The centre and its partners plan the curriculum very effectively. The curriculum is broad and includes a good variety of formal and informal learning opportunities. The centre ensures that there is a wide range of courses available on every level, from beginners' level courses to courses on the higher levels of proficiency, in most areas across the region. As a result, suitable courses are available within easy travelling distance for learners. Learners who are almost fluent can improve their skills by attending chat and story classes, or through studying Welsh history or Welsh literature. This is an excellent feature.

The centre works very effectively with a range of partners to arrange a good variety of extra-curricular experiences. As a result, an excellent range of learning opportunities is available to the learner. The number of learners who attend extra-curricular activities has increased greatly over the last three years. The extra-curricular courses include Paned a Sgwrs (Cuppa and a Chat), Mynd am dro bach (Going for a little walk), Gweithdy Coginio (Cookery Workshop), and social evenings. There are also a number of other initiatives and language clubs, which offer the learner very good support.

The centre works very closely with a good range of organisations that work through the medium of Welsh, to help learners to practise their language skills in a good variety of activities. These organisations include Tŷ Newydd, namely the National Writing Centre, Galeri Caernarfon, which offers a variety of cultural activities, and Merched y Wawr. As a result, learners improve their language skills and develop their confidence by taking part in a variety of activities, alongside Welsh speakers.

The centre also works very well with other organisations to increase and expand the use of the Welsh language through initiatives such as the language and heritage project with Menter Iaith Sir y Fflint. These initiatives improve opportunities for learners and Welsh speakers to use the language in a variety of different contexts. Good examples are seen in a few further classes of discussions on aspects of sustainable development and global citizenship.

The centre and its partners also work very effectively to offer learning opportunities to a range of different groups of learners. These include parents who want to support their children, learners who have lost their jobs recently and learners who live in deprived areas. The centre works well with a range of public sector organisations to help workers to improve their Welsh language skills.

Teaching: Good

All tutors plan their work well and use a wide range of effective learning activities, for example drilling new language, watching and listening, oral work in pairs, reading dialogues, comprehension and writing. They use a good range of high quality teaching resources in their lessons, including flash cards, clothes, props and appropriate work sheets.

All tutors make very good use of the Welsh language for teaching and communicating with learners at an appropriate level. They introduce new vocabulary effectively and intervene well in order to help learners to understand new language patterns. Most tutors present their lessons well with enthusiasm and energy and the pace of the lessons is good. They reinforce learners' previous learning well before moving on to a new subject.

Most tutors pay close attention to learners' pronunciation and they correct learners' oral errors in a sensitive manner. They also make good use of homework tasks in order to improve learners' skills. They challenge learners to extend their understanding and their use of language skills in a range of different contexts. In most cases, tutors offer good feedback to learners about their homework and they correct mistakes orally and in writing.

Most tutors encourage learners to take part in informal learning opportunities outside the classroom. This is a means of helping learners to develop their confidence when using their language skills in different situations.

In some cases, tutors have a good understanding of the standards achieved by individual learners in formal assessments. However, in general, tutors do not use these assessments well enough to offer feedback to learners on their progress and help them to recognise their achievements, or propose the next steps needed for learners to improve their performance.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The centre looks after the learners' health and wellbeing well. Each provider carries out a risk assessment on their centres. The information about financial support for learners is obvious, in the form of posters, and formal lessons and the Informal Learning programme gives attention to promoting living healthily. The centre's providers have an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. The arrangements for dealing with safeguarding issues and arrangements for training staff are in place.

The services, information and specialist guidance are good. In some cases, excellent provision is made for parents to be able to attend classes while their children are at nursery. Some providers hold introductory meetings or taster sessions before learners enrol. Levels of satisfaction among learners themselves are very high.

The centre's statistics show that learners who have additional learning needs have every support to sit examinations and they succeed. The centre follows appropriate systems in terms of screening basic skills. It is beginning the process of improving tutors' awareness of additional learning needs by providing specific training for tutors of the national qualification. In a minority of classes, good examples were seen of tutors' notes on the learning difficulties of individual learners and the steps for dealing with them.

Learning environment: Good

Tutors have established a welcoming atmosphere and an inclusive ethos in their classes. Clear progression pathways are available to learners and these pathways are open to all. There is equal provision for every learner. The providers take reasonable steps to develop a Welsh learning environment and ethos in the classrooms.

The centre is developing effective systems to promote and monitor the participation of different groups, including learners from underprivileged areas. The centre takes a leading role in developing links with ethnic minority communities.

Most of the learning resources and the buildings are fit for purpose. The learning resources, which are of good standard, include text books, individual files, appropriate games and sometimes useful compact discs. In a few classes there are

interactive whiteboards, but tutors do not always make the most effective use of them.

Most of the learning rooms are suitable, but there is not enough room available in a few of them, considering the size of the class.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Excellent
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Leadership: Excellent

A continuous commitment to reviewing and ensuring improvement permeates all of the centre's work. This has led to significant improvements in important aspects, such as improving achievements and increasing numbers, along with implementing systems for monitoring learning and teaching across the provision.

Responsibilities and lines of accountability have been clearly defined and the centre makes effective use of fora to plan and implement priorities. The way in which the centre consults with its partners is an innovative feature and has led to ownership of policies and systems across third party providers.

The strategic group, which includes representation from every provider's senior managers, receives regular reports from the quality panel and the providers' panel. As a result, the strategic group has ownership of policies and detailed information on the centre's performance, as well as the comparative performance of the individual partners. This enables it to play a prominent role in terms of determining a strategic direction and make challenging decisions on aspects such as allocating funding.

The centre makes extensive use of data to measure its performance and identify aspects where improvement is needed. This includes analyses that enable the centre to compare its performance with other centres and against the benchmarks of other sectors. The centre is innovative in the way that it challenges underperformance and supports providers to developing strategies for improvement. As a result, significant progress has been made in decreasing the variations between providers in aspects such as completion and success rates.

The centre has taken difficult strategic decisions for the good of learners and in order to raise standards. This is a feature of excellence. For example, they have come to an agreement with a provider and decreased the number of tutors for the sake of consistency.

The centre's strategic plan and the quality development plan include clear improvement priorities that arise from wide consultation and issues arising from the data analyses and self-assessment outcomes. These plans are reviewed continuously and make good use of quantitative indicators that enable the centre to measure progress against the objectives.

The centre is prominent in the field of research into aspects of Welsh for Adults and ensures that the outcomes are incorporated in strategic plans, as well as being disseminated on a national and international level.

National priorities such as economic regeneration, increasing participation in underprivileged areas and promoting learners' use of the Welsh language in informal situations have a prominent place in the centre's priorities.

Improving quality: Excellent

The centre's quality assurance system offers a model that is worth emulating in other sectors. Self-assessment is rooted in the day-to-day life of the managers and they have a very clear understanding of their role. The quality assurance plan is effective. Managers take appropriate and rapid steps to deal with underachievement.

The centre has an innovative and effective system for observation and there are very high quality analyses of the quality of teaching and learning.

The centre engages very well with a wide range of professional learning communities to benchmark its performance and share best practice. It takes full advantage of the close relationship with the further education sector in terms of analysing data and self-evaluation, including making very good use of a critical friend.

Managers listen and respond very well to the voice of learners and tutors. They use a simultaneous voting machine effectively in order to collect the opinion of staff. The strategic group also makes good use of Estyn reports to ensure improvements and evaluates the performance of individual providers according to effective allocation of the budget.

Managers have produced a very good system for sharing best practice among all members of staff.

The centre's self-assessment report offers a balanced and valid picture of its work. Six of the judgements in the self-assessment correspond with the judgements in the Estyn inspection. In the case of the other judgements, Estyn's judgements are higher than those determined by the centre.

Partnership working: Excellent

The centre has established a strong relationship with its stakeholders, based upon extensive consultation and including them fully in determining the centre's strategic direction. The agreed observation arrangements and the way that the centre addresses issues concerning performance across the provision is a clear sign of the high level of trust. The centre takes good advantage of the expertise of third party providers, including the use of a critical friend to scrutinise the self-assessment report. It also works together with the Mid Wales centre on strategic planning, quality control, training and planning provision.

The centre's officers work with a number of bodies involved with economic regeneration, including the Job Centre, Careers Wales and Communities First organisations. The way in which the centre has established a partnership with the North Wales Association for Multicultural Integration (NWAMI) is an example of the way it proactively increases participation among sub-groups.

The centre gives valuable support to major employers in the public sector. As well as providing Welsh lessons in the workplace, the centre is progressive in the way it assists the employers in producing language strategies and increases their capacity to achieve the aims of their Welsh language schemes.

A number of voluntary community groups are represented on the centre's informal learning panel and they contribute appropriately to planning provision.

Resource management: Excellent

The centre manages its resources very carefully in order to ensure that expenditure has the best impact possible on standards. Managers use a wide range of data in order to set appropriate aims and targets for improving quality. There is appropriate consideration of national and regional priorities when providing resources. Most of the buildings that are used provide a suitable learning environment.

The centre provides appropriate training for its professional staff in order to ensure the quality of provision that is consistently high. Managers use staff effectively to ensure the best of their time and their skills. Useful training and constructive support are given to inexperienced tutors.

In the light of the excellent standards, the centre provides excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

Estyn received 447 questionnaires that had been completed by learners. Estyn asked the North Wales Regional Centre to include a range of learners from their current provision. Learners filled in the questionnaires voluntarily and completed them during November 2011.

All learners were very positive about the provision. All respondents enjoy the learning and consider that they are taught and supported well by their tutors. They all believe that they are making good progress and that their learning is helping them to achieve their objectives. They would all recommend the provider to other people. All learners believe that the staff give useful feedback on how to improve their work.

All respondents consider that their learning helps to extend their knowledge and their skills. They all feel safe in class and assist one another well. Nearly all learners stated that good information was given to them by the provider when they chose their courses. They also believe that their learning has helped to improve their attitude towards keeping healthy.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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