



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

A report on

**St David's Catholic College
Ty Gwyn Road
Penylan
Cardiff
CF23 5QD**

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

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

About St David's Catholic College

St David's Catholic Sixth Form College was established in 1987 by the Archdiocese of Cardiff. It provides sixth-form provision at its campus located in the Penylan area of the city. The college employs approximately 130 staff members and caters for around 1,400 learners, nearly all of whom study full-time and are between 16 and 19 years of age.

The college offers learners a choice of 30 A level courses as well as level 3 vocational courses across eight subjects. AS and A level courses account for 64% of enrolments at the college, with level 3 vocational courses accounting for 23% of enrolments. Level 2 courses make up 10% of enrolments, with level 1 courses accounting for 2% of enrolments. The subject areas that have the largest proportion of provision are science and mathematics; business administration and law; arts, media and publishing; and social sciences.

The college recruits learners from a wide range of schools, including four Catholic secondary partner schools. Learners from a diverse range of socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds attend the college. Thirty-four per cent of learners live in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales as defined by the first quintile of the Welsh index of multiple deprivation. Twenty-six per cent of learners reside in the least deprived areas in Wales. Thirty-six per cent of the college population are black, Asian or have minority ethnic backgrounds. Thirty-nine per cent of college learners are followers of the Catholic faith.

The governing body is working on a proposal to dissolve the college as a designated further education institution and re-constitute it as a voluntary aided school according to the schools' regulations, under the control of the City of Cardiff Council.

Summary

The principal and senior leaders have placed the interests and needs of their learners and staff at the forefront of their work by successfully establishing a 'servant leadership' ethos. This underpins a developmental culture of high expectations that is supportive and inclusive of all learners and staff members. This approach has been very successful in securing sustained high standards for learners from all backgrounds.

Overall, learners studying for level 3 qualifications achieve very high grades relative to their prior GCSE attainment. In lessons, many learners demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and are able to apply prior learning to new contexts well. Many learners consider different viewpoints carefully, enabling them to play a valuable role in discussion and debate. Many learners work very well independently and a majority are highly effective in evaluating their own work and that of their peers to help them improve.

The college offers an extensive range of level 3 courses, which includes subjects that are not widely available elsewhere. The honours programme provides more able and talented learners with challenging provision to complement their subject lessons. Many teachers have high expectations of learners and plan effective lessons that challenge learners and enable them to master key concepts. Many teachers use their knowledge about the abilities and needs of individual learners to provide high quality targeted support.

Learners enjoy college life and value the multicultural ethos of the college. They participate well in charity and community-related projects. Many learners have developed a well-informed understanding of global, religious and moral issues. Most are ambitious and display a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards their learning.

The college evaluates its work in a comprehensive and highly effective manner. Senior leaders reflect carefully on the strengths and weaknesses of the college, enabling them to implement successful improvement strategies.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Excellent
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Excellent

Recommendations

- R1 Establish effective arrangements for obtaining information about new learners' additional learning needs from key partners
- R2 Ensure that all relevant learners have appropriate progression pathways to help them improve on their prior GCSE grades in English and mathematics
- R3 Help all learners to develop their understanding of the Welsh language and the culture of Wales
- R4 Make sure that learner punctuality issues are monitored and addressed effectively

What happens next

The provider will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare case studies on its work in relation to using the servant leadership model to foster a culture of high achievement, and using an evidence informed approach to improving teaching, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

During their time at the college, learners make very good progress. They demonstrate an exemplary ability to work both independently and in groups to develop valuable skills and knowledge. This productive approach to their studies helps learners to achieve very strong grades for their qualifications.

In nearly all lessons, many learners demonstrate comprehensive subject knowledge. Most learners recall prior learning well and many are able to apply this to new contexts very effectively. For example, A level music learners skilfully analyse contemporary Welsh performers in terms of harmony, melody, structure, rhythm and style. Nearly all learners make strong progress in lessons, with a majority making very good progress in their learning. Many exhibit strong analytical and problem solving skills, enabling them to produce work of a high standard. For example, in AS sociology lessons, learners analyse birth rate and divorce statistics to determine the impact on family structures. AS mathematics learners quickly assimilate new concepts relating to binomial distributions, and link them well with previous work on Pascal's triangle. In relevant subjects, many learners demonstrate very strong practical skills. For example, A level biology learners use microscopes skilfully to obtain sharp images and take precise measurements. Working confidently and responsibly with each other, learners can interpret and follow guidance very well. Many learners work very well independently both within and outside of lessons. They make purposeful use of the learning resource centre and other study areas across the college to undertake research and complete their work.

Nearly all learners listen attentively to their teachers and their peers. Many learners provide confident verbal responses to teachers' questions when prompted and a minority respond with thoughtful extended contributions. A few learners provide verbal and written responses that are highly developed. For example, in French lessons, more able learners use complex sentence structures to explain French vocabulary very well. A few learners ask insightful questions of their tutors and their peers. Many learners consider different viewpoints carefully, enabling them to play a valuable role in discussion and debate. Many learners take part in group activities enthusiastically, discussing ideas using subject specific vocabulary and technical terminology well. For example, learners discuss the ethics of genetic profiling in applied science lessons, and explain how different horror film effects are created as part of group discussions in media studies lessons. On a few occasions learners hesitate to contribute as part of teacher led whole-group discussions.

Many learners produce extended written work of a very high standard, writing with fluency using accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. They present balanced arguments based on insightful analyses. For example, AS English learners analyse and explain the language, presentation and meaning of poems exceptionally well. Most learners use assessment criteria skilfully to develop their understanding and many regularly improve their work following feedback. A majority are highly effective in evaluating their own work and the work of their peers to identify opportunities for improvement. Most learners present their work well and keep organised work folders that help facilitate their learning and examination preparations.

Many learners are able to apply numeracy skills adeptly to a range of problems. For example, A level economics learners calculate the balance of payments from different income streams successfully and A level geography learners interpret data plots confidently and accurately. In a few lessons across the college, learners do not develop their numeracy skills well enough. In GCSE mathematics resit lessons, too many learners do not make sufficient progress in their learning. Many learners develop their digital literacy skills suitably. For example, in Welsh Baccaalaureate lessons, learners of a range of abilities develop their digital data manipulation and presentation skills well.

Learners identified as fluent Welsh speakers further develop and apply their language skills by working towards the Welsh Baccaalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate through the medium of Welsh. These learners appreciate the wider benefits of being bilingual and the enhanced career opportunities that their Welsh language ability can provide. However, across the college, very few learners use or develop their Welsh language skills.

Overall, learners achieve outstanding grades at the end of their courses relative to their prior GCSE attainment. The grade attainment of learners has improved for 2017-2018 and is very strong for both A levels and vocational level 3 courses. The proportion of A level learners achieving A*-A, A*-B and A*-C grades is high. For example, many A level biology learners achieve high grades of A*-B. High grade attainment for vocational qualifications is also very strong.

Learners successfully completed their main qualifications at rates above the national average for the last three years. A consistently high proportion of learners studying academic main courses successfully achieve their qualifications. Learners undertaking vocational courses have successfully achieved their main qualifications at rates above the national average for two of the last three years. In 2017-2018, successful completion among the minority of learners undertaking vocational main qualifications fell to just below the national average. The grade attainment of the few learners who resit their mathematics or English GCSE qualifications at the college has been very inconsistent over the last three years.

A consistently high proportion of learners from deprived backgrounds successfully complete their main qualifications, and at Level 3 they achieve very good grades relative to their prior GCSE attainment. Overall, minority ethnic learners also achieve their main qualifications at high rates with very strong grades relative to their prior attainment. Main qualification success rates for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities have improved to reach a high level in 2017-2018.

Most learners leaving the college progress to education, employment or training. Many move on to courses at a range of universities, including those with highly competitive entry.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all learners enjoy college life and participate well in their lessons. Most display a positive and enthusiastic attitude to their learning. Nearly all learners are confident and considerate when interacting with their peers and teachers. They collaborate well and are able to discuss and debate complex issues such as global warming and capital punishment maturely.

Nearly all learners feel safe and cared for at the college and know who they can turn to if they have any problems. Most speak very highly of their personal and course tutors and value the support they receive. Most learners know how to keep safe online and are aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Many learners have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and the importance of good hygiene, diet and fitness.

Nearly all learners value the multicultural ethos of the college and they feel respected regardless of their faith, ethnic, or socio-economic background. Most learners participate well in effective pastoral and one-to-one tutorials. These address issues such as anti-bullying, health and resilience as well as providing regular constructive feedback to learners on their progress.

Most learners develop worthwhile employability skills as part of the college's tutorial programme. They participate in entrepreneurial activities, which help them to develop and present business ideas as part of their studies towards the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate.

Most learners are proud to be studying at the college. They are ambitious and demonstrate a positive attitude to learning through a keen interest in their work and their ability to sustain concentration during most lessons. Most learners following vocational programmes of study participate in beneficial work experience placements. For example, one learner is undertaking a work placement at an airline company to help fulfil her ambition of becoming a pilot. However, a few learners do not arrive on time for their lessons. Staff do not consistently record punctuality issues and, as a result, they are not routinely addressed as part of learner tutorial arrangements.

Nearly all learners are involved in the election of their peers as class representatives. These representatives lead useful learner voice sessions on a half-termly basis to gather learners' views. Most learners feel their views are listened to and valued, and that college staff respond to any issues raised. For example, learners requested increased opportunities for beneficial one-to-one meetings with their pastoral tutors. In response, staff and learners co-developed a well-received mentoring programme, which was launched in September 2018.

Most learners participate in charity or community-related projects. For example they organise fashion shows to raise money for various charities and plan sports days for local Catholic primary schools. Many learners participate in a beneficial enrichment programme that provides them with a wide variety of opportunities to engage with new experiences. These include a German school exchange programme, retreat days, and a chess club, as well as specialist subject area preparation programmes for law and medicine.

Nearly all learners take part in the college's reflective education programme. This programme helps learners to develop tolerance, resilience and a strong sense of responsibility. Many learners have developed a valuable understanding of ethical, global, religious and moral issues. They respect diversity and support their fellow learners well.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Nearly all teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish effective working relationships with learners. Most teachers use praise well to motivate learners. This

contributes to a trusting and supportive learning environment. Many teachers establish a culture of high expectations in their classrooms. They plan effective lessons with purposeful aims that challenge learners and enable them to master key concepts. They carefully organise tasks to help learners progressively develop their knowledge and skills. These teachers provide learners with high quality resources and demonstrations. For example, in media studies lessons, teachers model the process of critically analysing a news website superbly.

Many teachers use their knowledge about the abilities and needs of individual learners to provide effective targeted support. For example, in modern foreign languages, teachers use a sound understanding of individual learners' progress in the discrete language skills to target support successfully. A few teachers instil in learners a thorough understanding of key concepts and the confidence to express their views and challenge assumptions. These teachers focus extensively on the use of higher order literacy skills. For example, physical education teachers structure lessons very skilfully to develop learners' communication skills through the use of 'expert groups' to discuss the relationship between sport and politics.

Many teachers use questioning effectively to check learners' knowledge and consolidate understanding. A few teachers use questioning very skilfully to deepen responses. In these instances, they stimulate curiosity and encourage learners to think about alternative interpretations and to challenge the views of others in the group.

Most teachers provide helpful verbal feedback in lessons. Many provide useful and constructive written feedback that includes appropriate attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar. Many teachers incorporate highly effective peer assessment into their lessons. In these cases, learners are supported well to engage in skilful evaluation of each other's work. For example, in art and drama lessons, learners regularly reflect on the quality of practical work using assessment criteria to guide their evaluations.

A few teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for learners to discuss and debate issues in groups or pairs. They provide too much information or spend too much time leading discussions. They do not use higher order questioning sufficiently to challenge perceptions or encourage counter-arguments.

The college has an effective approach to curriculum planning that is informed by a secure understanding of labour market needs, learner aspirations, and university requirements. This has resulted in an extensive range of Level 3 courses, which includes subjects that are not widely available elsewhere such as modern foreign languages, criminology and medical science. An appropriate range of general vocational subjects at level 2 and level 3 provide learners with worthwhile alternatives to A level study.

The college's honours programme for more able and talented learners provides stimulating and challenging provision that enables these learners to develop their skills in critical and philosophical thinking. This helps prepare them for university very well.

The college provides learners with a wide range of enterprise activities to develop their entrepreneurial and employability skills. For example, the 'enterprise skills day' and the 'global enterprise week' activities involve learners interacting with local and national entrepreneurs. Learners aspiring to progress to university to study medicine or law benefit from valuable opportunities to engage with professionals and academics in these fields. The college provides beneficial work experience and work-related education for learners on vocational courses. However, overall, opportunities for A level learners to take part in work experience placements are limited.

The college provides a comprehensive range of enrichment options including sports, hobbies, cultural and academic activities. Learners have appropriate opportunities to engage with national competitions that complement their studies.

The college has begun to implement a purposeful digital literacy framework to ensure that all teachers are able to provide learners with the digital skills required for employment or further study. The college has a comprehensive strategy for the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills, although in a few subjects, teachers miss opportunities to develop learners' numeracy skills. As part of this strategy, the college provides targeted workshop sessions for literacy and numeracy and GCSE resit classes in English and mathematics. All level 2 programmes have dedicated skills lessons to support progression in these areas. However, GCSE mathematics provision does not address the specific needs of different abilities of learners well enough.

A few learning areas offer appropriate opportunities for learners to study aspects of Welsh culture, society and heritage. The college provides Welsh-medium pastoral support and Welsh Baccalaureate sessions to the very few learners who previously attended Welsh-medium secondary schools. A few learners following vocational programmes are able to develop their Welsh language ability through the college's 'Iaith ar Waith' programme. However, outside of these subjects, learning experiences that reflect the culture and language of Wales are underdeveloped.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The college has an effective system to monitor student attendance, progress and behaviour. Target setting and self-reflection are strong across the college, with most learners being clear about the progress they are making. However, while there is close monitoring of attendance, staff do not monitor and challenge punctuality well enough.

The college has recently introduced a new mentoring system as part of pastoral tutorial arrangements. This allows personalised one-to-one support to be provided to all learners. The college's learning support centre and wellbeing team provide a valuable range of support to help learners overcome barriers to learning. Pastoral and teaching staff work well with these teams. Learners for whom English is an additional language receive useful support to develop their written and spoken English from staff at the learning support centre. The college has identified an increase in the number of learners with mental health and emotional wellbeing needs and has put in place two part-time counsellors to provide specialist support. However, waiting lists for appointments are sometimes too long.

Learners with special educational needs are supported well. Staff track progress regularly to ensure that the support provided allows these learners to make very good progress. However, where learners do not have a formal prior statement of educational need, arrangements with partner schools to gather information about individual learning needs are not formalised or consistently effective.

The college provides learners with useful information and advice about provision that enables them to make informed choices. It runs open events, taster sessions and holds Saturday interviews for prospective learners. Learners experience a comprehensive induction and receive a helpful learning support guidance booklet, which explains clearly the range of support available.

In 2017-2018, leaders identified that fewer than half of learners felt that the college helped them understand healthy living choices. The college responded effectively to improve the focus on healthy living. Most learners now feel well informed about this topic.

The college's honours programme and participation in the regional Seren network, helps more able and talented learners to develop higher thinking and leadership skills, enhancing their prospects of accessing higher education. Mentors, pastoral staff and teaching staff provide effective support to the many learners who are aiming to progress to university. They give these learners helpful information about institutions and subject content, and advise them on how to research their choices in more detail. Most of these learners are well informed about what their next progression step will involve and, as a result, transition successfully to the next stage of education, training or employment. The college holds events to promote work-based learning progression routes, including higher apprenticeships, but only a few learners are aware of the full range of progression opportunities available to them.

The college has a strong multicultural ethos, and tutors and staff successfully encourage learners to work together in sessions in a respectful and mutually supportive manner. Pastoral staff help learners to develop an awareness of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Learners are able to explain how they practise these values as part of college life. There are also a few examples of learners establishing helpful mutual support groups in college.

The college enables nearly all learners to take part in worthwhile community volunteering activities. For example, learners develop football and rugby coaching skills which they use to support local schools and youth groups.

The college's arrangements for safeguarding learners, including its duty to protect young people from radicalisation and extremism, meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The principal and senior leaders have established an ethos, based on the Catholic faith, which is welcoming and inclusive of learners of all faiths and backgrounds. They are ambitious for the college and its learners, and set high expectations. This approach has been highly effective both in promoting a harmonious multi-faith and multi-cultural environment, and in securing sustained high standards for learners.

Leaders, teachers and staff at all levels are aware of the college's values and apply its distinctive 'servant leadership' principles to their own roles thoughtfully and effectively. These principles involve providing highly supportive, accessible leadership that prioritises the interests and needs of learners and fellow staff members.

The principal is well supported by the governing body who have a broad range of expertise. Governors are well informed about the performance of the college. They play an active role in shaping its strategic direction and providing appropriate advice and challenge.

Senior leaders have well defined roles and responsibilities and perform their functions very effectively. They employ thorough decision-making processes and make worthwhile evaluations of the impact of their actions. For example, recent improvements to the quality assurance and self-evaluation cycle include particularly useful evaluations of the impact of interventions on courses that are not yet consistently high performing.

Overall, the college's self-evaluation processes are comprehensive and robust. They take into account a wide range of information and use well designed criteria to arrive at secure judgements. Senior leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the college in a transparent and self-critical manner. Middle leaders have appropriate line management and quality assurance responsibilities. They play a proactive role in monitoring and improving the quality of provision in their departments and maintain useful ongoing evaluations of performance. They benefit from valuable opportunities to develop their own leadership experience and contribute to strategic developments through the college's extended senior leadership team meetings.

The college has clear quality and self-evaluation arrangements at all levels that help inform detailed and effective improvement plans. Two useful reflection points enable course teams and leaders to monitor improvement work and to identify courses that are consistently high performing and those that are not. Useful intervention strategies are in place to improve the 'not yet consistent' courses. Leaders evaluate the impact of these strategies effectively and outcomes for learners on many courses have improved. Overall, the college's cohesive leadership approach across all levels has helped teachers and learners to sustain very strong outcomes over time.

The college employs a comprehensive range of methods to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, including traditional lesson observations, scrutiny of learners' work and video recordings of teaching sessions. The results from these processes are evaluated according to the college's six pedagogical principles of challenge, explanation, modelling, practice, feedback, and questioning. Judgements are based around clear criteria which are applied objectively. The teaching and learning observation process identifies detailed strengths and areas for improvement in teaching.

The college uses well-focused professional learning based on its pedagogical principles to improve teaching and learning. This includes college-wide discussions about teaching and learning and innovative use of digital technology that enables teachers to share their practice with senior leaders and with each other. For example, the college has developed an online 'learning observatory' of teaching

development resources including video of effective practice across the college. These arrangements are supporting teachers to work collaboratively to continuously improve their practice and maintain high outcomes for learners.

Leaders manage resources well. The college has stable finances and consistently returns a small surplus. Leaders make responsible decisions relating to spending based on a carefully considered range of information and in keeping with the priorities of the college. The college has a suitable rolling programme of refurbishment and equipment renewal. The estate is fit for purpose and forms a stimulating learning environment.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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