



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

A report on

Pengwern College

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Pengwern College

Cambian Pengwern College is an independent specialist college situated in a rural location in Rhuddlan, north Wales. Since March 2019, the college has been owned by CareTech Holdings PLC.

The college is registered to provide education for up to 60 learners aged 16 to 25 years with moderate to profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical difficulties and autistic spectrum condition. Nearly all have a learning and skills plan or education, health and care plan.

There are currently 39 learners attending the college. The majority of learners are funded by the Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales and a minority are placed by local authorities in England. A minority have residential placements and the majority attend as day learners.

The principal was appointed in 2023 and has worked at the college since September 2017. The principal oversees all aspects of the college, including the educational, residential and estates management.

The head of education has responsibility for the day-to-day running of education provision and is supported by an assistant head of education, day student manager and two day student team leaders, and team of around 10 tutors and 35 learning support workers (LSWs). These staff support learners who attend the college on a day basis. Further, staff from the care homes attached to the college support residential learners in their lessons. A clinical team provides speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and nursing care to support learners at the college.

The curriculum provides opportunities for learners to develop their skills within one of two pathways: exploring work and exploring independence.

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

Main findings

Strengths

Pengwern College is a happy and welcoming community. Most learners engage positively with their learning. They listen to staff, follow instructions well and work with increasing independence.

Nearly all learners demonstrate positive social skills in their interactions with visitors to the college. In line with their needs and abilities they develop positive relationships with both staff and their peers. For example, in cooking sessions learners support each other to prepare ingredients and equipment for baking.

Nearly all tutors demonstrate a strong commitment to understanding the individual needs, contexts and interests of learners. They use this knowledge effectively to promote a positive learning environment and develop secure working relationships based on mutual respect.

The college provides learners with a range of beneficial opportunities to learn in a range of real-world contexts. Tutors have strengthened the curriculum offer to ensure it reflects the skills learners will need for their future lives. In many sessions, tutors use a creative approach to providing learning experiences that challenge all learners. For example, practising how to complete a form and then using these skills to apply for a library card or gym membership.

The college has strengthened its leadership team to provide stability and consistency. These changes have supported sound progress in areas such as safeguarding and curriculum development.

Areas for development

Although the college has strengthened its leadership team and quality assurance activities, many of these changes are recent and many initiatives are newly established. Currently work in this area does not consistently focus on the impact of teaching on learning.

Many staff provide active support for learners, challenging them to move forward in their learning. In a few instances, the impact of this support is too variable.

Recommendations

The college should:

- R1 Ensure that quality assurance and improvement planning processes focus on the impact of teaching on learning
- R2 Improve the consistency of learning support to improve progress in learning and independence

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Address the safeguarding concerns raised in the well-being letter

Since the time of the core inspection, leaders have worked diligently to address the concerns raised in the well-being letter.

Leaders have refreshed college policies in this area to ensure that they reflect relevant legislation and Welsh government guidance. They have prioritised professional learning in this area. Further, they ensure that staff read policies and use appraisal processes to confirm their understanding.

R2. Ensure that learning experiences and personal targets focus consistently on the future destination of learners

Since the last visit, the college has made good progress towards meeting this recommendation. They have strengthened their approach to learners developing a wide range of skills and preparing for their future destinations.

Leaders have implemented a clearly defined process for setting individualised and skill-based targets. This involves a thoughtful and collaborative approach with a wide range of agencies to support learners to access a variety of worthwhile learning experiences.

Tutors plan effective and appropriate interventions that develop work-related skills. These activities improve learners problem-solving, social communication, and interdependence skills. As a result, learners transfer these skills successfully into real life situations and are better prepared for their future destinations.

R3. Ensure that quality assurance and self-evaluation processes are robust and inform clearly the college's improvement priorities

At the time of the last inspection, the college was experiencing a prolonged period of change and instability in leadership and staffing. Despite the resilience and commitment demonstrated by interim leadership, a lack of capacity placed limitations on quality assurance and improvement planning. This resulted in an operational, rather than strategic, focus to leaders' work.

The college now has a stable leadership team, including a permanent principal, a head of education, and an assistant head of education. Alongside a strengthening of the education team, this has significantly increased leadership capacity. As a result, senior and middle leaders now have a clear strategic vision for quality assurance and development work. However, this has not yet been implemented in practice.

Significant improvements have been made in gathering the views of staff and learners. Leaders have gathered staff views through effective discussion forums and fed these into self-evaluation. Learners are given a voice in college improvement through the student council.

The college's self-evaluation now has an appropriate focus on strengths and areas for development. This is informed by first-hand evidence gathering, for example through lesson observations and data capture. However, many of these processes focus on compliance with organisational expectations rather than the impact of teaching on learning.

Outcomes of self-evaluation are being used to directly inform the college's quality development plan. However, the current plan's objectives lack sufficient detail, for example areas of responsibility, timescales for improvement, required resources and measurable outcomes. This inhibits leaders' ability to drive improvement.

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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