



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

A report on

Aspris College North Wales

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Aspris College North Wales

Aspris College North Wales is an independent specialist college. It is administered by Aspris Children's Services and is part of the portfolio of the Waterland group, a private equity investment company.

The college offers day placements for young adults aged 16 to 25 with autism and associated conditions. There are currently 42 learners at the college. Most learners come to the college from the local area. All learners have an individual development plan (IDP), learning and skills plan (LSP) or an education, health, and care plan (EHCP).

The college is managed by the principal and vice principal. They are supported by an interim curriculum and quality lead, three tutors, occupational and speech and language therapists, a transition manager, senior support lead and learning support workers.

The principal has been in post since October 2022. The college's last inspection was in June 2023.

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

Main findings

Strengths

Aspris College North Wales has established a bright and welcoming learning environment where learners feel happy and safe. Staff develop a strong understanding of learners' interests and build positive, nurturing professional working relationships.

As a result of recent investment in the college, learners benefit from opportunities to develop practical skills in real world settings. For example, learners work in the college coffee shop, work out in the college gym and cook meals in the college kitchen.

During practical sessions most learners engage fully, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and welcome visitors to the college with warmth and pride.

The college is continuing to develop its curriculum offer. It has strengthened the range of learning experiences to include more practical activities such as learning how to cross a road safely, using public transport and spotting hazards in the kitchen.

Areas for development

Although the college is beginning to strengthen the curriculum and teaching, a few sessions lack clear purpose and, in these sessions, activities do not challenge learners well enough to build skills progressively over time.

Processes to record and follow up on learner absence lack clarity and rigour. Staff do not have a consistent understanding of the immediate steps to be taken in the case of learner absence or lateness.

Over the last few years the college has undergone many changes, including changes to staff, leadership and premises. As a result, oversight and monitoring processes of a range of activities lack clarity.

Recommendations

The college should:

- R1 Improve the consistency and quality of teaching
- R2 Strengthen processes to record and monitor learner absence and punctuality
- R3 Secure effective arrangements for the operational oversight of the college
- R4 Refine quality assurance approaches to ensure they identify the impact of teaching on learner progress.

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1 Improve the consistency and quality of teaching

Leaders have made a number of changes designed to improve the consistency and quality of teaching at the college, for example the sharing of best practice between staff through peer-to-peer observation and peer mentoring. These activities have supported staff to deepen their understanding of meeting the needs of specific groups of learners. Further, leaders have made changes to planning documentation with the aim of improving staff's understanding of targets and learning.

There have been changes to teaching staff as well as their deployment, such as reducing the movement between tutors for the most complex learners. In addition, the senior support lead observes sessions with the aim of providing feedback to learning support workers on how best to support learners.

These changes are beginning to make improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching at the college. However, they are newly established and it is too soon to fully evaluate their impact.

R2 Strengthen self-evaluation processes to ensure that they focus on the quality of teaching and progress in learning

Since the last inspection leaders have begun to embed new arrangements to oversee both the quality of teaching and to track learner progress. Teaching is quality assured through regular lesson observations conducted by leaders and peers. Leaders evaluate the quality of teaching against a range of appropriate criteria, including subject knowledge, planning and adapting to the needs of the learners and the learning environment.

Peer observations have a broader scope and focus on 'what went well' and 'what could improve'. Consequently, leaders and teachers are beginning to gather a clearer understanding of the strategies and approaches to teaching used within the college. In both cases, however, observations do not link teaching and learners' progress within the individual lesson. As a result, leaders and teachers are limited in their ability to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and identify aspects of teaching practice that would benefit from improvement.

R3 Improve the learning environment and resources to ensure that they meet the range of needs of learners at the college

In autumn 2023 the college moved to new accommodation in a business area on the outskirts of Wrexham. Leaders planned carefully for this new environment to ensure that it meets the learning and well-being needs of learners particularly well.

This accommodation provides an engaging and inviting learning environment. This new building includes learning and well-being rooms, a sensory room, small gym, teaching kitchen, quiet spaces and offices. To compensate for a lack of outside

space the college has invested in outdoor gym equipment and supports learners to access local outdoor spaces as well as the local community.

This represents a significant investment in the college environment. Learners benefit from access to areas which are designed to develop key skills, for example the college kitchen and coffee shop.

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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