

A report on

Aspris College North Wales

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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 31 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.

The principal has been in post since January 2025.

Main findings

Aspris College North Wales provides a spacious, calm and positive learning environment, where staff and learners treat each other with respect. Learners at the college are highly welcoming to visitors and are proud to talk about their achievements and the opportunities they have.

The principal is committed and dedicated to improving the life opportunities for learners at the college. They have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further development. Staff feel listened to and value the support and professional opportunities that leaders provide.

The college has recently reviewed its values and has developed 'DRAGON' (development, resilient, adaptable, goals, optimism, nurture) with the support of all stakeholders. Further, the college has introduced a new reward system and 'college pound system' which has contributed to improved learner engagement and attendance.

The college provides a worthwhile programme of internal work experience that aims to develop learners' work-related and vocational skills through activities such as working in the onsite café. Opportunities for external work experience include local charity shops and businesses. Further, learners are supported to develop their ability to travel independently through structured travel training programme to help them access offsite activities.

Learners develop a range of important skills for their future lives within the college cafe. This is a strength of the college. Learners demonstrate money skills through registering items on the digital tills and taking card or cash payments. They also demonstrate social skills through engaging with the public and basic food hygiene by preparing soups, sandwiches and cakes to sell.

At the time of the visit, learners were participating in a global cultures, traditions and food week. Tutors planned sessions where learners were able to gain an appreciation of food from other countries, for example learners made Welsh rarebit or looked at different tea ceremonies across the world.

Support staff provide attentive and caring support and work collaboratively with tutors. However, in many sessions, the proximity of support staff in the classroom inhibits the development of learners' independence and skills. Further, planned activities are not always age appropriate and do not always aid in the skill development of learners. Where teaching was less effective targets from individual development plans (IDPs) are not consistently translated into classroom activities. Further, passive learners are not always consistently supported to reengage in their learning.

Leaders have revised approaches to baseline assessment of learners' skills and abilities. However, learning targets and progress recording systems do not consistently reflect individuals achievable next steps. This limits learners' understanding of how to develop their skills and measure their development.

The college has recently implemented new quality assurance processes for teaching and learning. However, these are in the very early stages of implementation and therefore too early to evaluate impact.

Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the college continue to improve:

- R1 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment.
- R2 Ensure that quality assurance and improvement planning processes focus on the impact of teaching on learning
- R3 Improve the consistency of learning support to improve progress in learning and independence

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning

The college provides a broad range of learning experiences. Leaders have recently restructured the teaching groups based upon learner need. Learners are now grouped in one of the four pathways known as explorers, pioneers, adventurers or navigators. Further, the curriculum has been reviewed to suit the current cohort's needs and strengthen learners' literacy skills. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact this is having on learner progress.

Leaders have implemented targeted professional learning opportunities to enable staff to understand how to meet learners' needs. However, planning age appropriate activities which develops learners' skills remains inconsistent. Further, activities are not always appropriately challenging to aid learners to make progress in line with their abilities. As a result, the consistency and quality of teaching and learning is still variable.

Strengthen processes to record and monitor learner absence and punctuality

Leaders have made strong progress against this recommendation. A revised attendance policy clearly outlines procedures and responsibilities for recording and reporting learner

absence and punctuality. As a result, the college uses data to identify and respond to patterns of reduced attendance effectively.

Leaders hold weekly attendance meetings to consider reasons behind learner absences and identify where interventions may be required. Person-centred well-being support plans are developed with learners and parents for those whose attendance causes concern. These plans recognise the unique challenges of learners and are carefully monitored to support a gradual increase in attendance and engagement.

The college has strengthened links between practice that supports wellbeing, engagement and motivation with their approach to learner attendance. For example, the introduction of a 'college pounds system' allows learners to build credits that can be used to influence choices and activities. As a result, overall attendance at the college has improved.

Secure effective arrangements for the operational oversight of the college

Leaders, including from the wider organisation, have made strong progress against this recommendation. They closely monitor the college's work successfully through a wide range of worthwhile activities. As a result, operational oversight is strong.

The wider organisation undertakes a yearly full college review involving the central education quality team, regional director, peer mentor and safeguarding lead, ensuring a thorough scrutiny of all aspects of the college's activities. In addition, cluster meetings, quality advisor visits and safeguarding audits results in the wider organisation having a clear understanding of the college's areas of strength and development.

The wider organisation has overhauled its approach to governance and has enhanced its quality assurance processes. Improved reporting systems and strong communication between the college and central teams has ensured that leaders at all levels are held accountable.

Refine quality assurance approaches to ensure they identify the impact of teaching on learner progress

Leaders have very recently introduced a new quality assurance approach to monitor the impact of teaching on learner progress. Leaders have undertaken learning walks and reviewed samples of learner's work. Further, they have worked collaboratively with partner colleges to moderate this work.

Leaders have introduced opportunities for reflective practice amongst staff known as the 'tutor lens'. This allows for the sharing of what is working well and opportunities for peer support.

Leaders acknowledge that they are in the 'embedding' stage of their quality assurance cycle and therefore it is too early to evaluate the impact.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the college and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

The report was produced in accordance with the Learning and Skills Act (2000).

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