



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

A report on
Aspris College South Wales

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of trying out our new inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

About Aspris College South Wales

Name of provider	Aspris College South Wales
Proprietor status / ownership of the college	The college is administered by Aspris Children's Services and is part of the portfolio of the Waterland group, a private equity investment company.
Date of Principal / Head of Education appointment	17 October 2016
Number of learners enrolled at time of inspection	49
Details of the provider's locality including campuses	The college has one campus in Cwmbran town centre. The facilities include four classrooms, a common room, a well-being room, a quiet room, a teaching kitchen, a life skills room and a coffee shop which is open to the public.
Background and circumstances of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of learners who are looked after (CLA): 4 • Proportion of learners English funded and Welsh funded: Nearly all learners are funded by Welsh Government or local authorities in Wales, a very few are funded by local authorities in England • Number of learners attending as day learners: 49 • Number of learners attending as residential learners: 0
Percentage of learners who speak Welsh or identify as Welsh speakers	0
Number of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds	0
Number of staff by role	The staff team comprises of a principal, business manager, transition manager, curriculum lead, two tutors, a speech and language therapist, an occupational therapist, two administration support, a senior support lead and 30 learning support workers.

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Significant changes since last inspection, e.g. change in name of provider or campuses	No changes
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/01/2017
Start date of inspection	18/03/2024

Summary

Aspris College South Wales is a happy community where staff place learners at the heart of everything they do. As a result, nearly all learners are engaged in their education and make good progress towards their individual targets. Over time, most learners make strong progress across a range of skills and progress on to positive future destinations, such as further or higher education.

Learners take on beneficial leadership roles at the college, for example through the student council, work experience placements or at the college's community coffee shop. As a result, they develop a range of important skills, such as social and communication skills and how to work as a team.

The college provides a comprehensive curriculum, which is well-matched to the needs and aspirations of learners. Learners complete a range of beneficial accreditation which support their skills development suitably. This offer is enhanced by the college's strong relationship with Coleg Gwent, the local further education college. The curriculum offer is supplemented with a range of community-based activities, such as work experience at a local farm, shopping for ingredients at nearby shops or work placements in the in-house coffee shop.

Transition is a notable strength of the college's work. There are robust processes to support learners when they join and leave the college. Staff already have a strong understanding of the future aspirations of new learners and how to support them when they arrive.

Nearly all staff develop highly positive working relationships with learners, based on a secure understanding of their needs and abilities. Tutors use this knowledge, along with assessment information, to provide a broad range of learning experiences which are generally in line with learners' needs and next steps. However, in a few instances, paper-based activities designed to evidence progress in learning do not develop learners' skills or understanding.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture at the college. They use meaningful collaboration with the therapy team and well-being mentor to ensure that learners understand how to stay safe and improve their well-being. For example, they build learners' resilience in the community and learn about how to stay safe online.

The college principal and leadership team provide highly effective leadership. They have developed a culture which is underpinned by the ethos of 'be the best you can be'. This ethos is shared and understood particularly well by staff and learners. Leaders evaluate the work of the college accurately, consult meaningfully with stakeholders and plan for ambitious improvements. The wider organisation supports leaders with a range of helpful quality assurance activities in areas such as safeguarding and health and safety. However, recent changes to this support are still being embedded and it is too soon to evaluate their impact on teaching and learning.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Ensure that tasks designed to evidence progress in learning are well matched to the needs and abilities of learners
- R2 Strengthen the governance support and challenge from the wider organisation to focus on the impact of teaching on learning

What happens next

The provider does not require any follow up. We will consider progress against the recommendations during our next routine monitoring visit.

Main findings

Inspection area 1: teaching and learning

Leaders have developed a well-considered curriculum that matches the needs and future destination of learners particularly well. The thoughtful planning of literacy, numeracy and digital competency is built into the curriculum provision incrementally. The college offers a range of accreditation, which complements the curriculum offer suitably. For example, learners complete courses such as employability, skills for life and problem-solving. As a result, nearly all learners develop worthwhile vocational and independent living skills throughout their time at the college. They apply life skills with minimal support, for example when stripping and making a bed. Many learners complete valuable work experience that prepares them for the next stage in their lives.

The curriculum offer is strengthened by the college's links with Coleg Gwent where learners access an extensive range of courses to meet their interests and future aspirations. As a result, nearly all learners progress to positive destinations, such as further and higher education.

Overall, tutors manage classes effectively and use a range of strategies and resources to engage and stimulate learners. Tutors use their knowledge of learners effectively to plan purposeful individual learning experiences that are well matched to learners' needs. This means that nearly all learners make good progress across a range of skills that support their learning and personal development. For example, most learners consolidate their digital skills effectively to support their learning. They use the internet to research information about various employment opportunities.

Most sessions are at the appropriate level of challenge to meet the diverse range of needs and abilities at the college, from learners working at pre-entry level to level 3. In the most effective sessions, tutors ensure that learning experiences develop skills

which then support learners to gain accreditation or progress to further or higher education. This is a notable strength. In a few sessions, learners complete worksheets which do not further their skills development or learning. Further, these activities are not always well matched to the ability level of the learner such as cutting and sticking activities.

Tutors use assessment information, in addition to transition information, effectively to plan a range of learning experiences which support learners well in preparing for their future lives. For example, learners practise making a bed, shop for ingredients and work to a budget.

Staff provide clear verbal feedback for learners to celebrate their achievements and tell them how to improve. Tutors provide learners with clear instructions to complete their work, however, in a few sessions tutors use a limited range of questioning to develop learning.

The sensitive and skilled support from learning support workers is a notable strength of the college. They develop highly positive relationships with learners and act as positive role models. They allow learners to work independently where possible. Overall, learning support workers are highly effective in supporting learning and helping learners regulate their emotions.

During the inspection, learners demonstrated highly positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. Nearly all learners actively participate in sessions, they organise themselves effectively and complete tasks with appropriate support. Learners demonstrate curiosity and inquisitiveness when faced with new challenges. Nearly all learners show determination and resilience in sessions, for example experimenting with various fabrics and resources when making a parachute in problem-solving sessions.

Learners talk confidently about their work and share this with pride. Nearly all learners treat each other and staff with respect and are considerate of each other. Learners collaborate well and enjoy shared learning experiences. They build friendships and trust and share ideas about what they have learnt.

Nearly all learners make good progress from their individual starting points in relation to their needs and abilities during their time at the college. Nearly all learners achieve units of accreditation in a range of qualifications that relate to their individual needs, interests and abilities. They make strong progress towards targets from their individual learning plans and, as a result, nearly all learners progress to positive destinations such as further education, higher education or employment.

During their time at the college, learners practise and consolidate their literacy skills at a level that is appropriate to their needs and abilities. Nearly all learners develop their communication skills successfully. They listen well, follow instructions accurately, and communicate their understanding with all staff and peers effectively. Most learners develop confidence in speaking and listening and expressing themselves effectively, such as when they discuss the options for the menus in their coffee shop. Most learners develop their writing skills progressively in line with their ability. For example, learners redraft and improve letters to send to the prime

minister. Nearly all learners read for a variety of purposes including researching precious stones on the internet and reading a novel for pleasure.

Over time, most learners make secure progress in developing their numeracy skills in line with their ability. They have a competent grasp of practical number skills. For example, they apply these skills when buying ingredients from a local supermarket and calculating income and profit from the coffee shop.

Nearly all learners develop their social skills well. They understand how to welcome visitors into their college and talk proudly about their achievements. Learners are confident greeting members of the public who use their coffee shop. This is a notable strength of the college.

The Aspris Hwb – coffee shop

Learners develop a range of important skills for their future lives within the college coffee shop. This is open every lunchtime to members of the public, selling meals, snacks and hot drinks. Leaders have planned this provision as a vehicle to develop a range of skills, for example social skills, basic food hygiene, cooking and money skills.

Learners complete an application to be considered for the role and then sign a contract with the college on appointment. In preparation for placements, they complete accredited qualifications in food hygiene and barista training, which can be transferred to future employment.

During preparation sessions, learners make products such as cakes, soups and sandwiches to sell that day. Learners develop their numeracy skills effectively through counting daily takings and completing monthly balance sheets. Further, learners develop strong communication and social skills in their interactions with customers and apply these in other sessions. As a result, learners develop a range of skills which support them well to progress to their future destination, such as further education.

Most learners develop their physical skills through a wide range of beneficial opportunities, such as trips to a local park to complete a scavenger hunt, litter picks in the local community, and accessing a local gym. As a result of these worthwhile opportunities, learners improve their physical, co-ordination and teamwork skills particularly well.

To improve teaching and learning further, the provider should focus on:

- ensuring that all learning activities, including those designed to evidence progress in learning, are meaningful and well-matched to learners' needs
- use of questioning to support progress in learning

Inspection area 2: well-being, care, support and guidance

Nearly all learners feel safe at college. They show respect for each other and build positive and trusting relationships with staff. Staff understand the needs and abilities of learners extremely well. As a result, learners are happy in college and engage well in their lessons.

Learners take on worthwhile leadership roles whilst at the college. The student council meet regularly and make valuable contributions to college life. For example, they have recently introduced a chess club.

Learners benefit from the valuable partnerships with other organisations that the college has established. For example, learners attend weekly sessions at a local art centre and attend police cadet groups on site. As a result, learners are provided with effective support for their well-being and personal safety. Recently, the college provided training to a local driving instructor who has been working with a few learners and their families to support them to gain their driving licences.

The curriculum supports learners effectively to understand how to stay safe. For example, they learn about how to stay safe online and maintain healthy relationships. Nearly all learners know who to talk to if they don't feel safe.

Nearly all learners feel that staff treat them with respect. There is a robust approach to developing learners' well-being at the college. The college has recently appointed a well-being mentor who provides weekly individual and group sessions. Sessions are learner led and there are opportunities to discuss their emotions and any support they may require. As a result, nearly all learners are happy to be in college.

Transitions and partnerships with other providers are a notable strength of the college. For example, in 2023, many learners transitioned to mainstream college, and a very few learners went onto university or into employment.

Partnership working for positive transitions

The college provides clear information to learners and parents prior to their admission including information on the college and photographs of staff and the building. This supports a reduction learners' anxieties about starting college and enables them to settle into college life well.

All learners have individual transition pathways upon entry into the college, which are reviewed regularly and ensure that they are being supported to achieve their long-term goals. There is valuable information captured about learners during their assessment, which includes their personal interests, education objectives and support needed. This enables the college to develop appropriate pathway trackers for every learner.

Nearly all learners benefit from transition days. Following this, learners provide feedback on the day and suggestions for their next visit. This allows the college to ensure learners settle well into college life.

There is a strong partnership between Aspris College and Coleg Gwent. Regular meetings take place between college leaders where important information is shared

regarding all current and potential learners. Staff at the college benefit from observing sessions at Coleg Gwent to enhance and develop their own teaching practice as well as enabling them to provide accurate information about courses to their learners. As a result, many learners successfully transition from Aspris College to Coleg Gwent to continue their education.

Learners have their therapeutic needs met well. The therapy team works with learners to set individual goals that enable them to develop the skills to recognise and meet their emotional and social needs. For example, one anxious learner was supported to access a café in the wider community and order items for themselves. This represents significant progress for this learner. Learners with sensory needs are provided with sensory diets and access a local gym to carry these out.

The college has developed a strong safeguarding culture. There are sound safer recruitment procedures and appropriate policies, which consider the specific Welsh context to guide the work of the college. The college benefits from the support of the wider Aspris organisation to ensure high standards of safeguarding and health and safety.

To improve further, the provider should focus on:

- developing the role of the well-being mentor

Inspection area 3: leading and improving

The principal has developed a clear and strong learner-centred vision and ethos of 'be the best you can be'. This is effectively communicated to stakeholders and informs the college's strategic priorities well.

The college's strategic plan gives clear and ambitious direction to the work of the college. As a result, staff clearly understand their roles within the college and how they contribute and support the needs of learners. There is a strong track record of continuous improvement and acting on previous feedback which further enhances provision.

Overall, the college's self-evaluation processes are comprehensive and robust. They take into account a wide range of information and use this successfully to arrive at secure judgements. Leaders use this information effectively to support improvements at the college. This results in collective responsibility for achieving the college's aims and improving provision.

The principal is supported very well by an established and cohesive senior management team at the college. Nearly all staff value the strong supportive culture and work together well in the interests of learners.

Leaders have a strong sense of purpose and strive collaboratively for the highest quality in all aspects of the college's work. The principal's knowledge of the college is comprehensive and her attention to detail is meticulous. The college's leadership systems and line management processes are well organised and applied consistently.

The principal ensures that high-quality accommodation and facilities are available which are used successfully to support teaching, learning and well-being. These facilities include the coffee shop, independent living skills area and learners' common room. The environment is cared for and well-maintained. As a result, staff and learners have pride in being part of Aspris College and look after these spaces.

The college supports the professional learning of staff well. Professional learning is relevant and nearly all staff value the professional learning opportunities provided. Leaders provide effective mentoring to staff as well as regular supervision. However, the quality of professional development targets is too variable, and not always linked well enough to the college's priorities. Learning support workers are empowered to develop their skills and improve their practice. As a result, staff successfully meet the needs of learners.

Leaders have ensured that the provision is continually adapted to meet the needs of the full range of learners. They have ensured that the curriculum and staffing arrangements, including therapy staff, meet the needs of learners, which have changed over time. Further, they have developed the environment to support the skills development of learners, for example through the in-house coffee shop.

The wider organisation provides appropriate quality assurance. Recent new appointments at the higher organisational level have resulted in changes to support and challenge, which are in the early stages of being embedded and therefore it is too soon to evaluate their impact on teaching and learning.

To improve further, leaders should focus on:

- professional development targets that reflect the college priorities
- how leaders at the wider organisational level contribute to the self-evaluation processes to focus more specifically on the impact of teaching on learning

Additional information

Safeguarding arrangements

The provider's arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults do not give any cause for concern.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analysed the outcomes from the parent/carer and learner questionnaires and considered the views of staff members through their questionnaire responses

During the inspection, inspectors:

- met the principal, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the college's work
- met learners to discuss their work, listen to them and gain their views about various aspects of their college
- met groups of learners in leadership roles, such as representatives of the student council
- visited a broad sample of sessions and undertook a variety of learning walks to observe learners learning and to see staff teaching in a variety of settings, including classrooms, small groups, in the community and in outdoor areas
- observed and spoke to learners at lunch and break times and at a sample of clubs, where appropriate
- attended assemblies and daily acts of collective worship, where appropriate
- looked closely at the college's self-evaluation processes
- considered the college's improvement plan and looked at evidence to show how well the college had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinised a range of college documents, including information on learner assessment and progress, minutes of staff and governing body meetings, information on learners' well-being, including safeguarding and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- reviewed the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, standardise and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

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

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 23/05/2024