



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

A report on

**Coleg y Cymoedd
Heol y Coleg
Parc Nantgarw
Cardiff
CF15 7QY**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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Context

Coleg y Cymoedd was formed in 2013 through the merger of the College Ystrad Mynach and Coleg Morgannwg.

The college is a medium sized further education college with an annual turnover of around £40 million. It has approximately 9,600 learners, of which around 5,200 study full-time courses. The college employs around 800 staff.

The college covers the areas of Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf. The total population of these counties is estimated at 413,000. In comparison with other colleges in Wales, Coleg y Cymoedd has a high proportion of learners who come from the most deprived areas as characterised by the Welsh index of multiple deprivation, with the majority of learners coming from the top two quintiles of deprivation.

Coleg y Cymoedd provides courses from entry level to level 6 across four campuses located in Aberdare, Nantgarw, Rhondda and Ystrad Mynach.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Adequate
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The college's current performance is adequate because:

- Learner success rates show an upward trend over the three year period
- Learners from deprived areas succeed at rates around or slightly below the national averages for learners from similar areas
- The college is responsive to employers' needs and has adapted its curriculum to meet specific demand and to aid learner progression
- Many teachers plan their lessons effectively and set clear objectives for learners
- Nearly all teachers display strong classroom management and establish productive working relationships with learners
- The college provides a range of valuable services to support the health and wellbeing of learners
- Learners with additional learning needs receive valuable support to help them overcome barriers to learning
- The college's well-resourced campuses provide vibrant, welcoming and motivational environments for learners

However:

- The majority of learning areas have success rates significantly below national averages
- Standards on academic programmes, including AS and A levels, are well below national comparators
- Learners' targets are not always sufficiently well focussed on improving their most urgent skills development needs
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge learners to achieve highly
- The college has not developed the use of the Welsh language by staff and learners sufficiently

Prospects for improvement

The college's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The principal, supported by the governing body, has been effective in establishing the new college
- Senior leaders have secured the support of staff at all levels developing a strong team ethos across the college
- Partnerships with industry are particularly strong and have a positive impact on learning opportunities, and meeting industry needs
- The college manages its finances well to support investment in accommodation and learning resources

- The college has developed sound self-evaluation processes that are beginning to impact positively on success rates, although quality assurance arrangements for AS and A level provision have been less effective in raising standards

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards and outcomes achieved by learners on AS and A level courses
- R2 Improve the rate at which learners successfully complete vocational qualifications across all learning areas
- R3 Increase the use of the Welsh language by learners and staff
- R4 Make sure that teaching strategies engage and challenge all learners
- R5 Make sure that all teachers support learners to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills
- R6 Make sure that quality assurance arrangements are robust and effective across all areas of provision

What happens next?

The college will incorporate actions into its quality development plan that show clearly how it is going to address the recommendations made in this report. Progress against these recommendations will be monitored periodically by the college Estyn link inspector. Estyn will invite the college to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Adequate
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Standards: Adequate

Most learners on vocational programmes make sound progress in their studies. A few learners make strong progress relative to their starting points. For example, many learners studying creative arts make very good progress and develop high levels of technical ability. Many learners in engineering practical classes also develop their practical skills particularly well. However, a minority of learners on AS and A level programmes do not make the progress of which they are capable.

A majority of learners progress appropriately to higher level courses within the college, apprenticeship programmes or higher education institutions.

A majority of learners come from areas of deprivation. Learners from deprived areas succeed at rates comparable to other learners within the college and around or slightly below the national averages for learners from similar areas. Learners with additional learning needs, learners from different ethnic groups, female and male learners generally successfully achieve their qualifications in line with the overall college performance.

Nearly all learners complete initial and diagnostic assessments at the start of their course. They have relevant targets in their individual learning plans to develop literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

Many learners apply and develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills appropriately within their studies. They listen attentively during lessons and contribute appropriately to class discussions and practical activities. In the best cases, many learners have well developed verbal communication skills, for example in peer critique sessions in art and design courses, where learners use evaluative language carefully to help evaluate the work of peers. However, a few learners are passive for long periods within lessons and do not progress in their learning at an appropriate pace.

The majority of learners complete suitable written work and use appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar, according to their level of ability. However, a minority of learners do not take sufficiently detailed notes in class, and produce written work with spelling, punctuation or grammar errors that they do not later correct.

In areas where numeracy occurs naturally, such as engineering, most learners use and develop their numeracy skills appropriately as part of their routine work. However, overall, many learners do not develop their numeracy skills as much as they could across their learning programmes.

A minority of learners use their digital literacy skills well to enhance their learning. For example, in A level mathematics lessons, learners use smart phone applications to plot graphs. In art and design, learners use social media effectively to share their work for presentation in class and as a tool for peer assessment. However, overall, the majority of learners do not learn, practise or develop a wide range of digital literacy skills.

Across the college, very few Welsh speaking learners undertake learning bilingually or in Welsh and very few learners undertake assessments in Welsh. A very few learners undertake the advanced skills certificate component of the Welsh Baccalaureate through the medium of Welsh.

In a minority of learning areas, a few learners make worthwhile progress in developing their Welsh language skills and their appreciation of the value of these skills in terms of employability, for example through Yr Iaith ar Waith programmes.

In 2015-2016, learners at Coleg y Cymoedd successfully completed their qualifications at rates below the national comparator. Overall, the college's success rates show an upward trend over the three year period 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. During this period, the overall rate at which learners successfully complete their qualifications has risen from 79% to 83%. However, the majority of learning areas across the provider still have success rates significantly below the national comparators.

The rate at which learners successfully complete their main vocational qualifications has shown a notable improvement between 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. However, learners completed their main qualifications at rates significantly below the national comparator.

Overall, standards on academic programmes have important areas for improvement and the rate at which learners successfully complete AS and A level qualifications remains well below the national comparator.

The published data for 2016-2017 indicates a continued rise in the overall success rate to 84%. Success rates on main vocational programmes have improved significantly from 73% in 2014-2015 to 82% in 2016-2017. However, success rates on academic programmes have remained static over the same period.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all learners feel safe at college, enjoy their learning and value the support they receive from staff. Many learners attend well but a few do not attend regularly enough.

Nearly all learners are courteous to each other, staff and visitors. They value and respect college facilities, and behave very well in communal areas. In lessons, almost all learners undertake their practical work responsibly.

Elected learner representatives work well with middle managers to identify and address aspects of college life that can be improved to better meet the needs of learners. At the college's annual learner conference, learner representatives discuss ideas and work together to recommend positive changes that the college can make. This includes the development of a short animated film to emphasise the importance of skills. Designated learner representatives form part of the college's governing body and help steer the work of the college at the highest level.

A majority of learners in around half of learning areas undertake valuable work experience activities. For example, learners following the Enhanced Engineering Programme undertake valuable extended work experience placements with

multinational technology firms and local companies. A minority of learners participate in a broad range of community-based projects. For example, music technology learners organise and host a music concert for the local area and performing arts learners work with young pupils at a local secondary school.

Many learners appreciate the healthy eating options provided by the college. A few learners actively engage with the college's 'Boost' enrichment programme of healthy lifestyle and personal development activities.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The college uses a range of labour market and regional information well to plan its curriculum. Learners access a wide range of further and higher education provision from entry level to level 6, including school link and work-based learning programmes.

The college is responsive to employers' needs and has adapted its curriculum offer to meet specific demand and aid learner progression. Progression rates to higher level courses have increased steadily over the last three years across all course levels.

Around half of full time learners have undertaken work experience in industry or work related experience at college. For example, catering learners at Y Nant restaurant at the Nantgarw campus prepare and serve meals achieving high levels of customer satisfaction.

Nearly all learners complete initial and diagnostic assessments and have relevant targets in their individual learning plans to develop literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. However, learners' targets are not always sufficiently well focused on improving their most pressing skills development needs, such as to support GCSE resit classes or in their vocational programmes.

There is a broad range of skills provision available for learners. However, the new delivery model for this provision is not established fully. There are very few opportunities for learners to undertake bilingual or Welsh medium skills courses. Speakers of other languages study appropriate qualifications.

Learners have beneficial opportunities to access to a wide range of enrichment activities that add value to their experience at college. This includes the 'Boost' extra-curricular programme, Seren Hub for more able learners, various skills competitions and sports academies.

The college has increased its provision for English-speaking learners to develop Welsh language skills. In 2016-2017, 339 learners in areas such as catering, travel and tourism, and health and social care completed Yr Iaith ar Waith units successfully. A suitable range of activities to promote Wales and the use of Welsh such as Sgil Iaith, Sgil Gwaith and Yr Wythnos Gymreig are available to all learners. However, there is limited Welsh medium provision at the college for learners who are Welsh speakers.

There are beneficial opportunities for learners to engage with environmental, sustainability and citizenship issues across the curriculum and in college.

Teaching: Adequate

Most teachers demonstrate comprehensive, up-to-date subject knowledge and technical skills. Many teachers plan their lessons well and set clear objectives for learners. However, a few teachers do not plan or structure lessons well enough and do not build upon learners' previous learning effectively.

In the majority of lessons, teachers have appropriate expectations. In a few sessions, teachers have high expectations of all learners and challenge learners well. However, the levels of challenge in a minority of sessions are too low. Overall, there is too much inconsistency in levels of challenge for more able and talented learners.

In most practical based subjects, teachers use practical tasks effectively to engage learners and link their work to vocational practice. For example, engineering learners undertake a wide range of industry related practical tasks confidently and competently. In a few areas, such as creative industries, teachers use digital technology well to record and display learners' work and to support skills development. However, in a minority of learning areas teachers do not develop learners' independence well enough.

Most schemes of work include an appropriate focus on skills development. However, in a few learning areas teachers do not consolidate sufficiently the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills learners develop in discrete skills classes.

A majority of teachers use a variety of suitable teaching and training strategies well and most use a wide and useful range of resources to motivate and engage learners. In a majority of lessons, the pace of learning is appropriate for learners to make sound progress. However, in a minority of lessons the pace of learning does not engage learners fully.

A majority of teachers use questioning skills appropriately. A few question effectively, probing learners in order to deepen their understanding and encourage discussion. For example in dance and music technology teachers use follow-up questions from other students to draw out responses skilfully. However, a few teachers do not use questioning well enough to develop learners' thinking skills.

Nearly all teachers display strong classroom management and establish productive working relationships with their learners that foster learning. Where relevant, teachers work appropriately with technical and learning support staff to assist learners' progress.

Most teachers provide useful verbal feedback that helps learners to improve their work. The majority of teachers mark learners' written work paying appropriate attention to technical accuracy and skills development. However, the quality of written feedback is inconsistent across learning areas. In the best cases, written feedback is useful and constructive and shows learners clearly how to improve their work. However, a minority of teachers do not provide feedback that helps learners' long-term improvement.

Many teachers uses an online tracking system appropriately to record assessment of learning and monitor learner targets. They use the information well to monitor the progress of individual learners and whole course provision. Learners play an active and valuable role in setting and reviewing their targets.

The college uses this information to provide useful reports to parents, guardians and carers twice a year. The college, through employers' steering groups, provides employers with regular and useful updates on learners' outcomes and progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The college provides a range of valuable services to support the health and wellbeing of learners. Services are accessible and provide worthwhile help to learners facing personal, financial, educational or other difficulties.

Learners benefit from a purposefully designed suite of enrichment activities that promote healthy living, employability skills and personal development. Timetabled tutorial activities encourage learners to reflect on their progress and aspirations, helping them identify their own development needs appropriately.

The college has effective systems to identify and meet learners' additional learning needs. Learners receive valuable support from the college and have access to a range of specialist external agencies to help them overcome barriers to learning.

All learners have access to impartial advice and guidance. Prospective and current learners benefit from worthwhile support when planning their next steps in education, training or work. Guidance includes helpful advice for learners who are undecided about their career aspirations or current study pathways.

The college has established beneficial information sharing arrangements with educational and social support organisations as well as public bodies and charities to ensure its work in supporting learners is effective. It works successfully with schools and local authorities to support those learners most at risk of becoming disengaged from education, training or employment.

The college deals well with incidents of bullying. Learners and college staff work in partnership to develop strategies that promote positive approaches to lessons and learning. This has led to improved learner attitudes, for example when using information technology and mobile phones in lessons. However, the college's work to improve learner attendance has not had enough impact.

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

Learning environment: Good

The college has established a culture of inclusivity across all four campuses. All campuses offer a welcoming environment in which nearly all learners feel safe and respected.

The college implements a range of effective strategies to promote equality and diversity. Many learners participate in equality and diversity events where external agencies and bodies, such as Stonewall and Disability Wales, give presentations. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender group meets regularly and is supported well by the activities of other groups of learners. For example, sports teams wear rainbow laces and level 1 catering students bake brightly coloured cakes to raise funds for the charity.

The college challenges gender stereotypes well and provides opportunities through its curriculum offer. For example, the level 3 women's football sports programme is part of a unique partnership with the Football Association of Wales. These students get elite football coaching, with many progressing to international honours.

The college's strategic equality plan identifies a clear set of objectives for the period 2016-2020. The current plan introduces new objectives, which include raising awareness of equality and diversity issues and the profile of national events. Performance against objectives is reviewed effectively in equality and diversity working group meetings and an annual report provides a useful summary of progress.

The college has been successful in securing Welsh Government and European funding which, along with the redirection of financial reserves, has supported innovative capital developments. This has resulted in well-resourced campuses and new accommodation that provide vibrant, welcoming and motivational environments for learners. For example, the Nantgarw campus includes a specialist railway engineering and electrification workshop. The well-equipped Aberdare campus opened in September 2017.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The principal provides clear strategic leadership that has had a significant impact on establishing and developing the college. The principal and governing body have been particularly effective in merging the two colleges and establishing as one institution. The merger was undertaken within a culture of transparency and clarity. During this period of significant change senior leaders have secured the support of staff at all levels establishing a strong team ethos across the college.

Strategic leadership roles were reviewed and revised earlier this year as the result of an identified need to strengthen the team and address key areas for improvement. The senior team is cohesive with well-defined roles and responsibilities and equitable levels of responsibility. They provide the college with clear and ambitious strategic leadership. Managers at all levels share a high level of understanding of what is expected of them and how they contribute to the work of the college. Staff across the college are supportive and committed to its strategic plan for improvement.

The college's strategic plan is comprehensive, focuses clearly on seven key aims and is underpinned by the college's mission and vision statements. The college's core values are understood by staff at all levels. The principal and senior managers actively promote inclusivity and widening participation.

Communication across the college is clear and regular. As a result, staff at all levels are well informed and kept up-to-date on a wide range of issues and developments, such as reforms to the curriculum.

Middle managers receive high levels of support from senior managers supplemented by beneficial training. Senior managers have a clear focus on raising the skills of middle managers and this has been a priority during a period of significant change.

They have developed a strengthened understanding of what is expected of them and senior leaders challenge and empower them to improve and develop their provision. Although learner success rates remain below national averages, strategies to improve them are beginning to have a positive impact.

The college's procedures for the performance management of staff have been strengthened. Managers undertake staff performance reviews with increased rigour, providing appropriate support and challenge. Underperformance is challenged appropriately with detailed action plans for improvement and routine reviews.

The college has strengthened its procedures for capturing and sharing performance data with managers. Managers and staff use the information contained in performance data dashboards well to monitor learners' progress against targets.

Members of the governing body understand their roles and responsibilities well. They have a wide range of experience in industry, commerce and education. They use their experience and skills well to support the principal and to give purposeful levels of challenge. This was particularly notable during the merger and the ongoing period of change and development for the college.

The governing body receives a comprehensive range of information and updates relating to the performance of the college. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the ambition and performance of the college and their key areas for improvement.

Improving quality: Good

The college uses a wide range of mechanisms to evaluate its provision, including information from learner surveys and analysis of management and outcome data. Data is compared appropriately to national benchmarking information and the college undertakes regular quality reviews of learning areas.

The college draws usefully on external resources, such as peer assessors from partner colleges to add an additional perspective. There are clear quality processes which are well understood across the college and are summarised helpfully in an annual quality calendar and handbook. Planning cycles are coherent and coordinated.

Teachers and managers in learning areas use online dashboards tailored to their needs to monitor a range of information. For example, teachers monitor the rate at which learners complete their initial skills assessments. Managers monitor retention rates and timetabling information. This enables them to identify potential problems as they arise, and respond accordingly. However, the monitoring of a few key areas for improvement, such as attendance, at a college-wide level is under developed.

The college has recently introduced a risk-based approach to prioritise its focus on potentially underperforming areas. In regular quality boards, managers apply appropriate criteria to identify which areas are at highest risk and allocate resources to evaluate and support these areas accordingly. Quality weeks take place on three occasions over the course of the year. During these, teams of college staff review learning areas based on their risk rating. They sample teachers' planning

documentation and learners' work, speak with learners and carry out lesson observations and learning walks. These processes produce detailed information about learning areas' strengths and areas for improvement, and lead to appropriate training to address the issues identified.

The college's learning area and overall self-assessment reports are useful documents. The whole college report identifies key strengths and seeks to evaluate the college's provision fairly. However, it lacks detail in identifying a few key areas for improvement, such as improving target setting for skills development. Learning area self-assessment reports also tend to underplay areas for improvement. In a few cases, judgments for learning area performance are overgenerous.

The quality improvement plan links well to most areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report. It contains specific actions that are clear with generally appropriate measurable outcomes. Progress against targets is monitored by the quality manager and is reported to academic board and the governors' curriculum and quality committee.

Overall, college evaluation processes are sound, and are beginning to have an impact on the success rates for vocational learners. However, quality assurance arrangements for AS and A level partnership provision over the past three years have not been effective. The college has taken steps to rectify this by ending the partnership arrangements and now has sole responsibility for quality assurance of its provision.

The college has made at least suitable progress in addressing all recommendations arising from previous inspections of the two legacy colleges.

Partnership working: Excellent

The college has a wide range of high quality partnerships which underpin and enhance learning and wellbeing and respond well to the developing needs of the Welsh economy. College partnerships work in a spirit of genuine collaboration putting the needs of learners above institutional self-interest. Good practice is shared openly with other providers with experience and contacts being used to initiate new partnerships.

The college is proactive in initiating ways of formally cooperating with a very wide range of industries, employers and agencies, including the voluntary sector. These partnerships enhance learning and employment opportunities, wellbeing and sporting enrichment. The female football academy is unique to Wales and the range and extent of effective sporting partnerships is extensive.

Partnerships with industry, such as a major aviation company and the railway sector, are particularly strong. These result in increased opportunities for learners and the development of qualifications that better meet the needs of industry.

Partnership working with small and medium sized employers is innovative. A business growth group has led to close collaboration between local businesses and the college. The setting up of an innovative mentoring programme to support local young entrepreneurs is particularly imaginative. This provides financial and

mentoring support to help young people to set up their own businesses in an area of high deprivation. It has also led to the establishment of a resident business mentor within the college.

A local shared apprenticeship project works with twenty employers. The college has donated high quality engineering equipment to a training facility in Blaenau Gwent for the purpose of training apprentices. Good practice from the project has been shared to enable neighbouring colleges to set up similar arrangements.

The college has well established partnerships with a wide range of schools. The partnership strategy focuses on school to college transition arrangements, with the college offering helpful support to learners in schools through provision of impartial advice on progression options. There are particularly strong partnerships to support learners with additional learning needs.

Links with higher education as part of a strategic alliance partnership are effective in supporting learners into higher education, for example by developing new higher level courses for chefs' training and for computer gaming design.

Resource management: Adequate

The college manages its finances well. It devolves financial budgets appropriately to faculty directors, heads of schools and functional area managers. There is effective use of an online budgeting and monitoring software. This enables scrutiny of all income, non-pay and pay expenditure at monthly management team meetings, ensuring close tracking of progress against financial key performance indicators.

The college has made significant investment in IT equipment, providing flexibility to teaching staff and learners when accessing digital resources. Learning resource centres are well resourced. However, on a few occasions learners are unable to access IT facilities due to constraints of timetabling.

The college deploys full-time and part-time staff well to ensure delivery of the curriculum. Where in-house expertise is not available, the college works well with third party organisations to deliver highly specialised aspects of its curriculum, for example railway engineering.

There is a comprehensive induction programme for all staff. The college also allocates a mentor to new staff to provide further support. There is a robust probationary process and managers challenge poor performance appropriately.

Most teaching staff have appropriate teaching qualifications. All staff are able to access a range of opportunities for their continuous professional development. This includes informal development opportunities, such as presentations from health and wellbeing practitioners, alongside more formal training events.

The college invests well in the continuous professional development of its staff and this year has increased its staff development budget significantly. This commitment to developing staff is beginning to have a positive impact in outcomes for learners on vocational courses.

Overall, the outcomes for learners are adequate and the college offers adequate value for money.

Learning area reports

Skills

Learning area context

The learning area of skills covers literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and employability, essential skills classes, and GCSE resit classes in mathematics, numeracy and English. Learners also receive scheduled online learning and assessment sessions, based around the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST).

Learners also develop their skills through their main programmes of study.

The college uses the national initial and diagnostic assessment tool, WEST, to identify learners' skills needs. Initial assessment results for 2017 show that 85% and 89% of learners have literacy and numeracy skills, respectively, at level 1 or below.

Learning area recommendations

- R1 Ensure that learners come prepared for skills lessons, ready to build upon previous learning
- R2 Improve the effectiveness of scheduled online learning and assessment in developing and extending learners' skills
- R3 Improve the impact of assessment on raising standards and consolidating learning
- R4 Improve teaching to ensure that all teaching is consistently of a high standard
- R5 Ensure that teachers across the college plan meaningful opportunities for learners to practise and develop their skills through their vocational programmes

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Judgement: Adequate

In most GCSE and essential skills lessons, the majority of learners make steady progress, often from low starting points. In a few lessons, the majority of learners make strong progress. A few learners develop independent approaches to learning and make clear connections between the literacy, numeracy and digital concepts they are learning and their wider learning and experience. For example, a learner in a digital literacy lesson quickly grasps the potential application of web development software in helping her develop a website for her painting and decorating business. However, a minority of learners make slow progress from their starting points in developing skills, and a few learners are passive or do not engage fully in lessons.

In lessons where learners with additional learning needs work with learning support assistants, they contribute to the lesson well, engage well with their learning and make generally good progress.

Many learners respond to teachers' questions well and contribute to class discussions. For example, in a GCSE English lesson, learners enthusiastically discuss with each other their pieces of descriptive writing.

In application of number, numeracy and mathematics lessons most learners demonstrate sound mathematical skills when performing simple operations. For example, most learners in GCSE numeracy classes can identify the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle and calculate the lengths of unknown sides using Pythagoras' theorem. However, a majority of learners rely too heavily on the teacher to identify step-by-step tasks and do not develop enough independence or problem-solving skills.

In skills lessons, most learners do not bring their work with them from previous sessions. This hinders their ability to reflect on previous work, to review assessment comments or to consolidate learning fully from one session to the next. In numeracy and mathematics lessons, around half of learners do not come properly prepared for their classes, for example with a ruler or calculator.

In scheduled online learning and assessment sessions, where learners work individually on computers to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, a minority of learners are distracted or disengaged and so do not make appropriate progress. A few learners do not attend these sessions regularly.

Nearly all learners have relevant targets in their individual learning plans to develop literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. These targets are usually derived from WEST initial assessments and are monitored by staff in the online learning and assessment sessions and by personal tutors in tutorials. However, targets are not always sufficiently well focused to guide learners to address their most urgent skills development needs, such as in support of the topics they are covering in GCSE resit classes or in their vocational programmes.

In their vocational programmes, many learners apply and develop their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills appropriately. Most learners listen attentively. Many respond well to teachers' questions and contribute effectively to class discussions. In the best cases, learners have well developed oracy skills, for example in peer critique sessions in performing arts courses, where learners use evaluative language carefully to help evaluate the work of peers. However, a few learners are reluctant to contribute their views and lack in confidence.

The majority of learners complete suitable written work on their vocational programmes, and use appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar, according to their level of ability. However, a minority of learners do not take sufficiently detailed notes in class, and produce written work with spelling, punctuation or grammar errors. A minority of learners do not practise writing in extended formats.

In learning areas where numeracy occurs naturally, such as engineering, most learners use and develop their numeracy skills appropriately as part of their routine

work. For example, learners measure and machine materials to fine tolerances. In health and care, learners draw graphs and interpret statistical data about alcohol use competently. However, overall, learners do not develop their numeracy skills as much as they could through their vocational studies.

In their vocational programmes, a minority of learners use their digital literacy skills to good effect. For example, in A level mathematics lessons, learners use smart phone applications to plot graphs. In art and design, learners use social media effectively to share their work for presentation in class and as a tool for peer assessment. However, the majority of learners do not learn, practise or develop a wide range of digital literacy skills.

Many learners develop confidence throughout their GCSE resit and essential skills studies. They value the opportunity to take GCSE exams and the support they receive from their teachers.

Across the college, a few learners develop their Welsh skills appropriately. However, Welsh speaking learners in a few areas are limited by poor access to bilingual materials such as terminology lists.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Judgement: Adequate

The college has recently adopted a core block-timetabling model on each campus. This offers a broad range of courses to develop literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. Provision includes GCSE mathematics, GCSE numeracy, GCSE English and essential skills. There are appropriate opportunities for learners on the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification to develop their skills through the skills challenges.

The college makes appropriate use of information about prior attainment, WEST initial assessments and other assessment tools to allocate learners to courses at the level of provision most suited to their needs.

However, the core block timetable for skills is a recent development in this academic year and is not embedded fully. This leads to inconsistencies that have an impact on learners. For example, a few learners have been allocated to the wrong class and appear on the incorrect register. This affects how teachers report on progress and attendance.

A majority of full time vocational learners attend scheduled online learning and assessment sessions to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. However, the quality of these sessions varies between campuses and, in a minority of these sessions, tutors do not provide sufficient supervision to ensure that learners make progress against their targets.

Tutors and learners set targets collaboratively using college systems and learners can access these freely. Personal tutors monitor targets in tutorial sessions regularly. As a result, nearly all learners know their targets and what they need to do to improve. However, targets are not always sufficiently relevant to the learners' current studies.

In skills lessons most teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge, are appropriately qualified and are effective role models. They work well within their teams and use collaboratively produced and well-planned schemes of work. In vocational areas, many teachers plan useful opportunities to develop learners' literacy skills. In a few learning areas, teachers develop learners' digital literacy skills effectively using apps, social media and software with confidence. In a few learning areas, teachers develop numeracy skills well within context. For example, in engineering, learners measure worn components and compare them to pre-set tolerances. However, in a majority of learning areas, opportunities to develop learners' digital literacy and numeracy skills are limited.

Nearly all teachers establish good working relationships with their learners and manage behaviour well. However, a minority of teachers accept too readily that learners come ill prepared for their lesson, for example when learners do not bring previous work or necessary equipment. In a minority of cases, this goes unchallenged and as a result, learners become dependent on the teacher providing them.

Many teachers use an appropriate range of questioning techniques and a few use questioning skilfully to probe and extend learners' understanding. Many teachers in learning areas such as A levels and art and design regularly use questioning well to promote the correct use of technical terminology.

Most teachers explain concepts clearly and give beneficial individual assistance. They give useful verbal feedback that shows learners how to develop and refine their work. However, the quality of written feedback varies too much in skills lessons and across learning areas. Too often, comments are superficial and do not lead to lasting improvements in learners' work.

The college provides Welsh and English speaking students with suitable opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills, for example, through Iaith ar Waith customer care units in subjects identified by the Welsh Government as priority curriculum areas. Although initial assessments are available in Welsh, there are very few opportunities for learners to undertake bilingual or Welsh medium skills courses. However, the college is offering Welsh Baccalaureate provision this year in Welsh for the first time. This provides learners with the opportunity to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills through the medium of Welsh.

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies

Learning area context

Engineering and manufacturing technologies courses represent approximately 11% of the college's provision. Engineering courses are delivered on three campuses, each being housed in specialist engineering facilities.

The provision delivers a comprehensive and wide range of full time courses, part time and evening courses. In 2016-2017, there are 402 full-time and 184 part time learners attending engineering courses.

Currently, engineering provision includes delivery of courses in electronics, mechanical and motor vehicle, railway, aeronautical and general engineering.

Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve outcomes for learners in courses that perform below national averages
- R2 Make sure learners take ownership of their skills targets and attend skills classes regularly
- R3 Make sure teachers use questioning consistently to test learners' knowledge and understanding
- R4 Make sure that teachers reflect on previous learning and set a clear direction for each session

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Judgement: Good

In 2015-2016, learners in engineering and manufacturing technologies successfully completed their qualifications at rates significantly above the previous two years. This places the college above national comparators. Unpublished data for the learning area in 2016-2017 is robust and shows the success rates of learners have been maintained.

Many learners make at least appropriate progress and a minority make strong progress. In theory classes, many learners show secure theory knowledge that enables them to complete written tasks well. For example, aeronautical learners show sound subject knowledge when questioned about the theory of flight.

In practical classes many learners develop their practical skills particularly well. They demonstrate competence when undertaking a wide range of practical tasks. Learners use hand tools and fixed machinery confidently. For example, mechanical learners use lathes confidently to machine components to accurate tolerances. Also, motor vehicle learners demonstrate competence when undertaking a wide range of servicing and maintenance tasks on vehicles.

All learners undertake an initial assessment for literacy and numeracy. However, learners are not always clear what their literacy and numeracy improvement targets are. Learners' written work is generally presented appropriately with few spelling and grammar errors. In a very few cases, learners pay insufficient attention to the presentation of their written work. Learners apply their numeracy skills well when completing practical tasks, for example when calculating machine feed and speed rates and when calculating electronic resistor values.

Welsh speaking learners use their Welsh language skills effectively, where appropriate, to engage with teachers in classrooms and workshops.

While attending courses, learners feel particularly well supported by their teachers. They feel safe in practical workshops and pay careful attention to health and safety. Nearly all learners demonstrate respect for each other and their teachers. As a result of undertaking their courses, many learners make strong progress in improving their confidence and self-esteem. They are positive and enthusiastic about their learning and many are ambitious to progress to a higher level.

Many learners develop a wide range of skills that enhance their employment opportunities. In classrooms, workshops and around the college learners behave well and care for their learning environment. Most learners arrive for sessions punctually. However, learner attendance rates in skills classes is below that of vocational classes.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Judgement: Good

The learning area plans its curriculum effectively. It offers a comprehensive range of courses to meet the needs of learners, employers and local labour market requirements well. The provision includes specialist courses for the aerospace and rail industry. The provision supports learners particularly well to develop their employability skills and prepares them effectively for progression into employment.

Most teachers take the opportunity to develop learners' numeracy skills in practical workshop sessions. In these classes, they develop learners' understanding effectively by applying numeracy skills within a wide range of practical tasks. Many teachers give learners useful support to improve their literacy. However, a few teachers do not use the college's literacy and numeracy marking scheme consistently and, as a result, a few learners have not developed their writing skills well enough.

Most teachers have sound up-to-date subject knowledge and use their skills and industrial experience well to support learners. Many teachers plan lessons well, have clear objectives for learning and use an appropriate range of teaching strategies to motivate and secure learners' progress in learning. Teachers deliver practical sessions particularly well and, as a result, learners make sound progress.

The majority of teachers use an appropriate range of questioning to test learners' understanding and knowledge and a few encourage learners to think about how they would improve their work. However, a minority of teachers do not use questioning effectively enough to test learners' understanding or to encourage them to give extended answers to more complex questions.

Most teachers give constructive verbal feedback to learners on their performance. However, a few do not give learners constructive written feedback to help them improve their work. Most teachers use an appropriate range of procedures to monitor and track the progress of learners effectively.

Nearly all learners receive useful initial guidance and induction programmes. These provide learners with a comprehensive introduction to the college and the learning area. The majority of tutorial sessions are purposeful and provide learners with useful opportunities to review and reflect on their learning. However, in very few classes tutorials lack purpose. Learning area staff make sure learners have access to the support they need and, in most classes, teachers provide meaningful personal support to individual learners.

The provision is delivered in a wide range of high quality accommodation including workshops, laboratories and classrooms. Teaching and learning resources are of a

particularly high standard. They include a comprehensive range of up-to-date industry standard equipment and machinery and unique resources in the railway training centre. Overall, the learning area's learning environment meets the needs of learners particularly well.

A levels

Learning area context

The college's A level provision is delivered as part of the sixth form centre at the Nantgarw campus. This dedicated centre was established in 2012 as part of a sixth form partnership between the college, a local school and a neighbouring college. Through this partnership teachers from each organisation contributed to A level teaching of Coleg y Cymoedd learners alongside the sixth form pupils from the local school. The three organisations shared the leadership and management of the centre.

The sixth form partnership is being phased out following review of the centre's performance commissioned by the college in 2016. In September 2017, Coleg y Cymoedd took sole responsibility for leadership and management of the centre. The centre currently provides AS and A level education to over 400 Coleg y Cymoedd learners across a range of 22 subjects.

Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve success rates for AS and A level courses
- R2 Ensure that AS and A level learners attain good grades relative to their starting points
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment
- R4 Improve the degree of accountability and clarity of responsibilities across the sixth form centre

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Judgement: Unsatisfactory

The proportion of Coleg y Cymoedd learners who successfully complete their AS and A level qualifications is too low.

Since 2014-2015, the learners studying on AS and A level courses have successfully completed their qualifications at rates well below the national comparators. Unpublished data supplied by the college indicates that in 2016-2017 successful completion rates remained broadly similar to those of the previous two years. In a few subjects, learners achieve grades in line with, or better than, their prior attainment at GCSE level would indicate. However across the centre overall, too many Coleg y Cymoedd learners do not achieve the AS and A level grades of which they are capable.

In lessons, a majority of learners make suitable progress in their learning. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is consistently good and learners make strong progress. However, a minority of learners rely too much on teacher direction and assistance. They do not take ownership of their work and make limited progress.

Many learners recall prior learning suitably well, and a minority are able to apply their knowledge and skills to new contexts effectively. A minority of learners provide appropriate responses to questions when prompted and a few give extended and insightful responses. However, in many lessons, a majority of learners do not actively take part in verbal question and answer sessions. A minority of learners do not organise their subject notes well. They present their work poorly, for example by not taking sufficient care when plotting graphs, and there are too many incomplete pieces of work in their work files.

Many learners use a sufficiently wide vocabulary and a majority write appropriately with sound spelling and grammar. The majority of learners are able to scan text efficiently to locate key pieces of information from a range of sources.

Nearly all learners behave well, maintain concentration appropriately and show respect and consideration for each other and their teachers. They undertake practical work in an appropriately careful manner. Many work suitably well when in groups or when working independently. However, a minority of learners do not interact confidently with their teachers.

Nearly all learners develop their employability, social, and life skills by engaging in community projects and work-related activities. A few learners undertake these activities through the medium of Welsh. The majority of learners also take part in valuable extra-curricular sport or enrichment activities. The majority of A level learners across the college successfully progress to higher education, with a very few securing progression to highly competitive universities.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Judgement: Adequate

The sixth form centre offers courses in a broad range of A level subjects, alongside a dedicated suite of complementary vocational courses that learners can opt to study alongside their AS or A level subjects. The curriculum offer meets the needs of a wide range of learners well, and allows for progression to higher education, apprenticeship programmes or to direct employment.

The centre offers the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification to all of its A level learners, and has recently introduced the option to undertake this qualification through the medium of Welsh. The centre works successfully to prepare its most able learners, and those from a neighbouring school, to apply for entry to highly competitive universities.

Many teachers identify useful opportunities for learners to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons. However, a minority of teachers do not plan sufficiently well to take full advantage of opportunities to build the development of these skills into their lessons.

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects. A majority of teachers make worthwhile use of a planned series of coherent and engaging activities to support learning well. These teachers communicate objectives clearly and use a variety of strategies to engage learners. A few teachers plan their lessons well to meet the needs of all of their learners. However, a minority of teachers do not use an appropriate range of learning activities. In a few lessons, too many learners are passive for extended periods, the pace of learning is too slow, and learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Most teachers make suitable use of questioning to test learners' prior knowledge and a few teachers employ particularly effective developmental questioning techniques to encourage learners to expand upon their responses. The majority of teachers across the A level provision highlight spelling, punctuation and grammar errors suitably in learners' written work. A majority of teachers provide valuable written feedback to learners explaining clearly what they need to do to improve. However, a minority of written feedback is too superficial to help learners to improve the standards of their work sufficiently.

The college has suitable entry requirements for its A level courses. Almost all learners have timely access to detailed advice and guidance prior to joining the college.

Pastoral support for learners has been inconsistent in recent years. However, from September 2017, the learning area has aligned its systems with Coleg y Cymoedd support services. Effective learner pastoral support is now available via dedicated pastoral tutors. Learners have access to an appropriate range of enrichment activities as part of the college's 'Boost' programme.

The sixth form centre is housed within the main Nantgarw campus building, which provides a high standard of modern accommodation for its learners. All classrooms are well equipped and provide good learning environments for learners on all A level courses. The college has also recently made suitable improvements to its timetabling arrangements to make sure that dedicated classrooms are available for the teaching of specific subjects.

Health, Public Services and Care

Learning area context

The learning area of health, public services and care offers a broad range of courses in child care and adult health and social care at levels 1 to 6. The learning area represents 14% of the college's total provision.

Learners study health, public services, care and child care across the four college campuses at Nantgarw, Ystrad Mynach, Rhondda and Aberdare.

Many learners on health, public services and care courses come from areas of high deprivation. Almost all of these learners have to overcome barriers to learning in order to make progress in education.

Learning area recommendations

R1 Improve the rates at which all learners successfully complete their qualifications

R2 Share best practice in teaching sessions to improve consistency across all campuses

R3 Improve learners' punctuality

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Judgement: Adequate

Over the last three years, success rates for learners on their health and care qualifications have improved slightly. However, successful completion rates on all three main health and care qualifications remain slightly below the national comparator. Successful completion rates on the level 1 diploma are significantly below the national comparator. Over the past three year period 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, trend data places the learning area consistently in the bottom quartile of all colleges in Wales for all main qualifications.

Unpublished data provided by the college for 2016-2017 indicates that success rates have improved slightly for all main qualifications. The level 1 qualification success rate has shown significant improvement.

Many learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional needs, make sound progress in their learning. Almost all learners show improved confidence particularly in speaking and listening. Nearly all learners develop relevant vocational skills well, both in college and on work placements. Learners at all levels complete relevant work placements that enhance their learning and employability. Most learners produce a high standard of written work in their portfolios.

All learners undertake initial and diagnostic skills assessments at the start of their course. Most learners are set appropriate targets and find these useful in planning and tracking their progress. However, in a few cases, targets are not challenging and specific enough to help learners improve. Most learners produce written work at an appropriate standard and use vocationally relevant terminology very well in lessons. A majority of learners show satisfactory progress towards their qualification aim.

Nearly all learners work together well in classroom activities. Most learners show appropriate skills development related to their vocational practice. For example, level 1 learners learn about infection control through handwashing activities. Learners on a childcare course learn about the early years curriculum through developing story sack resources, such as using hand puppets and board games.

Very few learners speak Welsh or develop Welsh language skills in lessons. A minority of learners undertake an additional qualification to improve their Welsh language skills.

Nearly all learners feel safe and supported in college. They know whom to contact if they have any concerns regarding their health, safety or wellbeing. Nearly all learners show respect for their peers and staff.

Many learners attend lessons regularly. However, a minority of learners are late for lessons. Across the learning area, nearly all learners are well behaved and demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning. Most learners take pride in their written work and their course work files are well organised and presented.

Most learners participate enthusiastically in community events held in the college through undertaking fundraising activities. Many learners provide beneficial feedback about their learning experiences to the course representative or college staff.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Judgement: Good

The learning area offers a wide range of health, public services and care qualifications across all four college campuses. This provision meets the needs of the communities served by the college well. Courses in health and social care and childcare are available from level 1 to level 6. The curriculum is designed appropriately to make sure that learners have clearly defined progression routes into employment or higher level qualifications. The college has well-established links with employers and learners at all levels have access to a wide range of work experience opportunities that meet or exceed their learning programme requirements.

Most teachers demonstrate comprehensive and up-to-date subject knowledge and are able to link their lessons well to vocational practice. A majority of teachers have thorough schemes of work and plan their lessons well to develop their learners' knowledge and skills. Most teachers develop the use of technical vocabulary effectively, particularly with learners on level 1 programmes. For example, level 1 learners are able to use microbiology terms accurately in their sessions.

Teachers have good working relationships with learners and motivate them suitably to achieve their qualification aims. Almost all teachers use an extensive range of teaching methods to stimulate and engage learners. For example, teachers encourage level 3 learners to research theories of child development from a range of sources and synthesise their findings effectively. However, in a few lessons teachers do not always challenge learners enough.

Nearly all teachers plan assessment activities well. The college has a robust tracking system, which teachers use to monitor the progress of their learners effectively. Nearly all learners know how to access the tracking system to review their targets and see their own progress. Almost all learners know how they will be assessed and when assessment activities will take place. Nearly all teachers give learners positive and useful written feedback to help them improve.

Nearly all teachers promote high levels of health and wellbeing during lessons. The college has an informative induction process for all learners at the start of their course. All learners participate in regular supportive tutorial sessions with their course tutor. Teachers provide pastoral care and support and know their learners and their needs well.

Many classrooms provide suitable accommodation that is fit for purpose and conducive for learning. Much of the learners' work is displayed in most campuses and this is used well to enhance the learning environment. A majority of wall displays in campuses are bilingual and appropriate to the qualifications studied in the learning area.

Art and Design

Learning area context

The creative industries learning area comprises art and design, performing arts, music technology, creative media and production arts. Provision is based on all four campuses.

The learning area delivers vocational provision from level 1 through to level 6. In 2016-2017, there are approximately 545 learners on creative industries courses representing around 10% of enrolments across the college.

Learning area recommendations

R1 Improve the quality and consistency of extended writing

R2 Improve the quality and use of developmental feedback, particularly for written assignments

R3 Improve the quality of learner targets for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Judgement: Excellent

Performance in creative industries courses has improved over the last three years. In 2015/16, the success rate for many courses was above the national comparator. Unpublished data for 2016-2017 provided by the college indicates further substantial improvement in success rates.

Many learners make strong progress in their learning and progress to higher education or employment in the creative industries. This includes many learners who enter creative industries courses with limited skills or from a low starting point. These learners make exceptional progress and this is a particular strength of standards in this learning area.

Most learners in performing arts demonstrate valuable skills in performing, creating and directing. They show self-discipline and, over time, refine their technical ability well. For instance, in dance learners communicate meaning sensitively using different ballet techniques. A few learners demonstrate particularly high standards of physical and vocal control and respond very well to direction from teachers and other students.

In production arts, many learners show that they are able to work independently to design and realise intricate theatrical make-up and hairstyles. In doing so they create designs confidently that enhance character and have a highly effective impact on the audience.

Many learners across the learning area demonstrate secure specialist knowledge of industry related skills. For instance, in music technology groups of learners undertake sound checks competently. They show a secure understanding of how to use a mixing desk effectively to achieve a suitable tone and balance of sound.

In the performing arts and music technology, many learners take the lead in practical sessions. They share their expertise with other learners proficiently in order to help them improve their skills. For instance, in dance, learners provide their peers with sensitive and helpful feedback on performances. This has a significant impact on the quality of work produced, particularly that of learners who have worked hard to achieve small steps of progress.

Many learners in art and design produce work that reflects their ability to work effectively in a range of media. They explain confidently how particular processes, genres or artists influence their work. These learners apply important creative skills adeptly in areas such as life drawing, print making and fashion and textiles.

The majority of learners write appropriately for a variety of purposes. They use evaluative language suitably to reflect on their practical work. A minority of learners rely too heavily on descriptive writing. A few learners write very well at length in a fluent and well-structured way.

Most learners speak confidently and contribute well to discussions. Learners in a few areas use their numeracy skills appropriately to support their practical work. For instance, in animation a few learners are able to identify frame rates accurately. A few learners with Welsh language skills demonstrate confidence in using their language skills both orally and in writing.

Nearly all learners participate in practical sessions very enthusiastically and show a high level of commitment to their choice of course. They have a strong sense of pride in their achievements and are keen to share the progress they have made. For example, level 1 creative media learners explain how they use a variety industry standard software to create effective promotional materials skillfully.

Nearly all learners demonstrate exemplary attitudes to their peers and teachers. They are exceptionally supportive of each other and are particularly helpful to weaker learners or those who have made strong progress from a very low base. This has helped individuals and groups of learners develop high self-esteem. It has a positive impact on their progress and self-confidence. For instance, in performing arts the support provided by learners and teachers in practical sessions is an outstanding feature of this subject area.

The inclusive ethos and strong sense of community is an exceptional feature across the learning area. Learners of all abilities value this supportive culture, particularly those who feel that engagement in creative industries courses has provided them with an opportunity to develop their talents and succeed at rates which match, or exceed, their expectations.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Judgement: Good

The learning area provides a wide range of courses that meet the needs of nearly all learners very well and enables them to follow their career choices and specialist areas of study.

The curriculum area has established valuable links with a range of creative organisations and employers that has a positive impact on the experience of learners. For example, in art and design learners participate in worthwhile community projects such as a highly creative fashion show for a national charity. Similarly, a local sound festival enables learners to develop skills in events management and performance.

External specialists enhance provision and make a worthwhile contribution to practical workshops. For example, a local company specialising in drawing workshops is used to deliver life drawing lessons. A few courses do not explore the opportunities available in the south Wales creative sector productively enough.

Learners have the opportunity to utilise their creative skills when completing Welsh Baccalaureate assignments, for example by engaging in community arts provision. However, opportunities to integrate Welsh Baccalaureate projects into creative programmes in a meaningful way are limited. Art and design learners have valuable opportunities to complete assignments in Welsh and are supported well to extend their language skills. Learner targets for the development of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills lack precision and are not sufficiently measurable.

Nearly all teachers have positive working relationships with learners. An important strength of this learning area is the trust and respect displayed between learners and teachers. This trust enables learners to take risks in a supportive environment and communicate sensitive issues through art and performance. Most teachers are positive role models and have relevant experience in the creative industry.

Many teachers plan interesting and engaging sessions that challenge learners to experiment with a range of techniques, styles and genres across creative industry disciplines. They use a variety of creative resources to engage and motivate learners of all abilities appropriately. A few teachers do not engage and challenge learners sufficiently through the use of effectively devised tasks suited to the needs of individual learners.

The majority of teachers use questioning techniques effectively to probe and deepen understanding. A few teachers do not use targeted questioning well enough in order to check the understanding of individual students before they move on to the next stage of their learning.

Most tutors use digital technology effectively to explain ideas and assess progress. A few tutors do not make enough use of available digital resources to deliver and assess learning effectively.

Most teachers provide valuable verbal feedback in teaching sessions that helps learners refine and improve their work. Many teachers provide suitable written

feedback on completed coursework and identify common spelling and grammatical errors in learners' work. However, this practice is not consistent enough and the use of helpful annotated feedback on written and visual work is limited.

A few teachers use peer assessment extensively in order to develop learners' critical reflection skills. For example, performing arts teachers expect learners to engage in high quality evaluation of the work of their peers in a structured way.

Personal tutors know their learners well and use tutorial time flexibly to meet their needs. For instance, in art and design personal tutors spend time usefully in developing learners' understanding of how they can use visual language to evaluate work.

The learning area uses college wide services to support students with additional learning needs well and communicates important information effectively. These students are supported well by subject tutors to develop their subject specific skills and have appropriate access to additional services. For example, the Inspire to Achieve learning coach provides valuable support to learners at risk of disengaging from learning.

Business, Administration and Law

Learning area context

The learning area offers a wide range of full and part time courses for business, finance and law at levels 1 to 6 across all four campuses. These courses include business, skills for further study, IT applications, event management, accounting, access to higher education and law. AS and A level programmes in business and law are managed and delivered through the A level learning area.

Around half of courses are located at the Nantgarw campus, a few in Ystrad Mynach and in Rhondda and a very few in Aberdare. In 2017, around 700 learners were enrolled on courses in this learning area.

Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve the successful completion rates
- R2 Improve attendance and punctuality
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Judgement: Adequate

Published data for 2015-2016 indicates that learners on around half of the main qualifications in the learning area had successful completion rates above the national comparator. The college's own unpublished data for 2016-2017 indicates a moderate improvement in success rates for those courses that were previously below the national comparator. However, a few courses, such as around half of level 3 business courses, have not improved enough.

Nearly all learners listen well to each other and their tutors. Many learners demonstrate suitable prior knowledge and apply this understanding appropriately to their learning. In a minority of lessons, learners make strong progress, for example when calculating staff turnover within human resources. Most learners are aware of their target levels for skills. Many use the dedicated skills lessons appropriately to work towards improving their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Most learners work well on their own. However, a minority of learners do not have sufficient prior learning or do not acquire new knowledge well enough to move on securely to the next stage in their learning.

The majority of learners contribute appropriately in class when asked a question by the tutor. However, they do not always do so confidently and a minority are passive. A very few learners offer extended responses to teachers' questions. Many learners have well organised files and generally write accurately and at appropriate length for assignments. They use subject terminology effectively to explain key concepts. However, a minority do not include enough analysis or evaluation in their written work.

A minority of learners use their numeracy skills confidently in tasks that are relevant in the context of their main programmes of study, such as when calculating in percentages the popularity of mobile phone brands for market research.

Nearly all learners are very respectful to each other, staff and visitors to the college. They behave well in class. Nearly all feel safe in college and know whom to turn to if they need help. However, in a minority of lessons learners do not attend regularly or they arrive late.

A few learners develop their leadership skills usefully as class representatives. A high proportion of learners develop their confidence in the world of work successfully through well-matched work experience opportunities.

A few learners improve or maintain their Welsh language skills by submitting work in Welsh for assessment. Very few learners practise their Welsh language skills in lessons.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Judgement: Adequate

The learning area offers a broad range of courses that have been adapted well to meet the needs and interests of learners and employers. The college provides more able learners with opportunities to follow valuable additional qualifications, such as the certificate of securities and investments and a creative solutions diploma in business. The college offers a wide range of valuable work placement opportunities to learners of all abilities as a result of well-established links with employers.

Nearly all teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge and experience. Many teachers plan their sessions well. They explain key ideas clearly, focus suitably on key vocabulary and plan learning appropriately to challenge learners. They use an appropriate range of engaging strategies and activities to maintain learners' interest. For example in a few lessons, teachers use mobile phones productively and, in other

instances, team-teaching is used effectively to support weaker learners. However, a minority of teachers do not challenge all learners well enough. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is too fast or too slow. Particularly, where the pace is too fast, learners are not able to consolidate their subject skills effectively to move on successfully to the next stage in their learning.

In a minority of lessons, teachers develop learners' numeracy and digital literacy appropriately in the context of their learning. While many teachers focus appropriately on key vocabulary, they do not use enough contextual examples to develop learners' literacy skills and cross-curricular themes effectively.

The majority of teachers use questioning techniques appropriately to test learners' basic knowledge of key concepts. However, a few teachers do not include all learners when questioning during class discussions. In addition, few teachers use probing questions to further assess and develop learners' understanding of concepts. The effectiveness of teachers in picking up on common literacy errors is too variable. In a minority of the work seen, teachers do not explain to learners clearly enough how they can improve their work.

A few teachers use Welsh greetings and learners are able to submit assignments in the Welsh language. Bilingual terms are available for business learners but this resource is not used well enough in teaching.

The learning environment is well resourced with appropriate accommodation and access to sufficient laptops and computers.