



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

**A report on**

**Gower College Swansea  
Tycoch Road  
Swansea  
SA2 9EB**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**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:

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

Gower College Swansea is a further education college with over 4,000 full time and 8,000 part time learners from across Swansea and neighbouring counties. The college employs approximately 1,000 staff.

It operates from six locations across the City and County of Swansea. The main campuses are at Tycoch, where a range of vocational and other provision is delivered; and Gorseinon, where A level provision is delivered. Vocational creative arts are delivered at the Lwyn y Bryn site.

Swansea is the second largest city in Wales, with a mixed economy including engineering, retail and hospitality, health, leisure, tourism and university sectors. Around a quarter of the college's learners come from the most deprived areas, as characterised by the Welsh index of multiple deprivation. This is around the average for colleges in Wales.

The college offers a curriculum from pre-entry level to higher education level. It is the largest provider of A levels in Swansea, which has a range of schools with and without sixth forms.

The college experienced a major fire at its Tycoch campus in 2016. Planned building work, as well as refurbishment of fire-damaged buildings, was taking place during the inspection.

## Summary

<b>The provider's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The provider's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The college's current performance is good because:

- Learners successfully completed their main qualifications at rates slightly above the national average. Overall, success rates show an upward trend over the three year period.
- Many learners who successfully complete their courses progress onto higher level courses at the college, into work-based learning, higher education or employment.
- In vocational programmes, most learners make sound progress in their studies and a majority attain generally strong grades. Their skills and technical competencies develop well.
- In A levels, learners successfully complete their qualifications at rates above the national comparator. Across the majority of A level and AS level courses, learners achieve strong grades and, in a few courses, learners attain very high grades in relation to their prior attainment.
- The college works well to meet learners' and employers' needs and has an appropriate range of provision. A level provision is extensive, including subjects that are not widely available across Wales.
- Most teachers plan their courses and lessons well and set clear expectations for learners. They use an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods and high quality learning resources that interest, motivate and engage learners.
- The college provides highly effective and responsive support for its learners. Support staff and teachers promote the wellbeing of learners very well. More able learners benefit from a very wide range of valuable activities, including personal coaching, visits to outside institutions and wider academic enrichment.

### Prospects for improvement

The college's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Leaders and managers provide clear direction to staff.
- The college has a clear and well-focused strategic plan. Planning takes account of unforeseen developments well and is flexible enough to enable the implementation of effective contingency plans.
- Governors are well informed about college priorities and make an effective contribution to challenging leaders and managers.
- The college has an appropriate cycle of quality management, which ensures that staff and learners make valuable contributions to self-evaluation and quality improvement processes.
- The college has very strong partnerships with a wide range of local and regional employers, the local authority, other colleges and universities. These bring

benefits to learners through providing opportunities to apply their skills, engage in useful work-related education and access further and higher education.

- The college takes a prudent approach to financial and estates planning and budgets are closely scrutinised by governors.

## Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all learners attain the highest standards and grades they can
- R2 Improve the extent to which learners practise and develop their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills through their vocational and academic programmes
- R3 Increase opportunities for learners to sustain and develop Welsh as an employability and life skill
- R4 Improve teaching strategies to ensure that learners of all abilities are challenged sufficiently in lessons
- R5 Make sure that all self-evaluation processes are robust, evaluative and accurate across all areas of the college

### What happens next?

The college will incorporate actions into its quality development plan, to 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

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### Standards: Good

In 2016-2017, learners at Gower College Swansea successfully completed their qualifications at rates matching the national average. Learners successfully completed their main qualifications at rates slightly above the national average. Across other indicators and qualification types, learners generally succeed at rates around or above the national averages.

Overall, success rates show an upward trend over the three year period from 2014 to 2017. This is notable in vocational qualifications, which have improved from success rates being below the national average to becoming equal to the national average. The majority of learning areas have success rates equal to or above the national averages and show improving trends. However, a few learning areas across the provider still have success rates below the national averages or show declining trends.

Learners from different ethnic groups, male and female learners, learners with additional learning needs and learners with disabilities successfully complete their qualifications in line with the overall college performance. However, learners from more disadvantaged areas succeed at rates slightly lower than the college average and the equivalent national averages for their group.

Most learners who successfully complete their courses progress onto higher level courses at the college, into work-based learning, higher education or employment.

In their vocational programmes, most learners make sound progress in their studies and a majority attain generally strong grades. Their skills and technical competencies develop well. Most learners engage well with their teachers and fellow students and contribute well to classes and workshop sessions.

In A levels, learners successfully complete their qualifications at rates above the national comparator. Across a majority of A level and AS level courses, learners achieve strong grades and, in a few courses, learners attain very high grades in relation to their prior attainment. However, in few courses, learners attain lower grades than might be expected from their prior attainment.

In their classes, most A level learners recall prior knowledge effectively and many are able to apply their learning to new contexts well. A few learners gain valuable knowledge of wider research. For example, in psychology lessons, learners source and evaluate published case studies independently. Many learners express themselves well as part of conversations in lessons. They accurately and confidently use subject specific and technical terminology when explaining their ideas. However, in a minority of lessons, a few learners do not contribute actively to lessons and are reluctant to take part in group discussions.

Most learners complete appropriate initial and diagnostic assessments at the start of their course and use this information to identify their overall strengths and weaknesses in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Nearly all learners understand the need to improve from their initial levels. Learners use the information from these assessments appropriately to set broad targets for improvement and many monitor these suitably. However, the targets set are not sufficiently short term or precise. As a result, learners are not able to articulate their particular areas for development well enough.

The majority of learners in pre-GCSE and GCSE resit mathematics and English classes make appropriate progress from their starting points. However, for a minority of these learners, progress is slow.

In their vocational and A level classes, most learners present their written work well. Many write appropriately for a suitable range of purposes. In particular, those working at higher levels make accurate word choices and use subject specific terms well in their writing. Many show a sound understanding of the texts that they read from a range of sources, for example from manuals or research. Many level 3 learners synthesise information effectively from a range of sources. However, a few learners do not summarise or synthesise well enough.

Many learners spell appropriately for their age and ability. However, a minority do not write confidently independently. For example, they make incorrect word choices or do not consider their audience well enough, or their writing lacks sufficient structure.

Most learners have a sound understanding of numeracy tasks in skills sessions. The majority use calculators appropriately to work out simple calculations for real life problems. In a minority of learning areas, many learners develop their numeracy well in naturally occurring contexts, for example by using formulas to calculate averages or analysing data using government statistics. However, a minority of learners across all programmes do not develop their numeracy well enough in context. A minority of learners rely too much on calculators to carry out basic calculations.

In a few learning areas, many learners use a suitable range of digital tools to complete tasks on their main programmes of study. However, overall too few learners develop their digital literacy skills well.

Around 340 full time learners at the college are Welsh speakers and a minority of these complete initial assessments using WEST to identify their strengths and areas for development in Welsh. In a very few learning areas, learners with a range of linguistic abilities develop their Welsh language skills well. For example, childcare learners develop useful verbal Welsh skills, which benefit them in their work related activity. In A levels, Welsh speaking learners attend Welsh medium tutorial groups. A few learners take part in events that allow them to practise speaking Welsh and take part in Urdd competitions, including at national level. However, across the learning areas, too few learners attempt units of study or assessment through the medium of Welsh, or sustain and improve their Welsh language skills through their vocational programmes.

## **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all learners feel safe at college. Most attend their lessons well and enjoy their learning. They value the support they receive from teachers and wider college staff. Learners have a worthwhile understanding of the importance of healthy living. Most learners are motivated to achieve in their studies. They behave well in lessons and in communal areas. They show respect to their teachers and their peers. However, in a few learning areas, a few learners arrive late for their classes, leading to delayed lesson starts.

Learners are able to influence the work of the college well. For example, learners put forward suggested improvements on an electronic student forum that college managers act upon. Recent improvements to the college's IT infrastructure and sporting facilities have been influenced by learners in this way. Two learners act as student governors. They are full members of college's governing body, and as such are able to help steer the work of the college at the highest level.

Around half of learners studying vocational courses undertake valuable work experience. A minority of learners participate in worthwhile activities that help them become involved in their communities. For example, performing arts learners tour local primary schools holding workshops with pupils.

Many learners take part in a range of beneficial enrichment activities and sports academies. For example, many independent living skills learners participate in sports events and exercise classes.

Most learners progress onto further study, work or apprenticeships.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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## **Learning experiences: Good**

The college works well to meet learners' and employers' needs and has an appropriate range of provision. Curriculum planning uses labour market intelligence well, and close working with the college's work-based learning provision offers clear progression across vocational and academic pathways, from entry level to level 7 and to employment. The college's A level provision is extensive, including subjects that are not widely available across Wales.

The college maintains a database of local employers and their needs. It uses this well to help develop programmes and plan the curriculum to meet the needs of businesses within the area. Well-established employer links enable curriculum areas to arrange meaningful work placements or work related experiences for many learners. Where work placements are not available, learners are encouraged to participate in community involvement projects, for example in contributing to a street art project.

The college has appropriate GCSE resit provision, which allows learners who have not previously attained GCSEs at A\*-C in English or mathematics to improve their grades. It has a relatively new skills policy, which is beginning to have an impact on learners' skills development. The college offers appropriate provision for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at advanced level.

The college's 'Bridge' programme works well to re-engage school and college learners who are at risk of becoming not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). Many learners successfully complete the programme and a majority progress to a further level of learning or into employment. The college's focus on NEET prevention has recently led to the creation of a dedicated one-to-one employability advice and support programme. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this programme.

The college has developed a Welsh delivery and assessment strategy and the college's Welsh bilingual champion has produced a useful toolkit to help staff develop and embed Welsh resources into their teaching. However, currently, too few learners sustain or improve their Welsh language skills through their programmes of learning.

A minority of teachers use naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship, and learners work well on projects that explore this further. For example, A level learners have taken part in a project to support Kenyan students to have access to education, including raising funding for a school.

### **Teaching: Good**

Most teachers demonstrate strong up-to-date subject and technical knowledge. Many use their industrial experience and skills well to develop learners' theoretical knowledge and practical competence.

Most teachers plan their courses and lessons well and set clear expectations for learners at the start of each session. They use an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods and high quality learning resources that interest, motivate and engage learners.

Nearly all teachers establish positive and productive working relationships with learners that foster learning and enable most learners to make good progress. Many work effectively with technical and support staff to meet the needs of all learners. A majority of teachers set demanding tasks and activities that challenge learners of all abilities and progress their learning at an appropriate pace. However, a minority do not use extended questioning or other teaching strategies, such as follow up tasks, well enough to ensure that all learners attain the outcomes and grades of which they are capable.

Many teachers equip learners well with the necessary skills and personal qualities to enable them to progress to study on higher level courses or gain employment. In specific classes for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, a majority of teachers provide beneficial opportunities for learners to develop and enhance their skills. However, in vocational classes, only a few teachers plan well enough to consolidate and apply these skills within the context of the learners' main academic and vocational qualifications.

Many teachers use appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies well to plan and improve learning and attainment. Many provide useful written and verbal feedback on learners' work that helps learners to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve the standard of their work and attain higher grades. However, in a few cases, written and verbal feedback is not precise or developmental enough to lead to improved outcomes.

A few teachers are beginning to experiment with the use of technology to provide useful voice recordings of verbal feedback that enables learners to access and review teacher feedback outside of their lessons.

Most staff keep comprehensive records of learners' achievements, for example when using an electronic mark book. They provide learners, parents and carers with useful online or written reports on learners' outcomes and progress. Most also provide valuable opportunities to attend progress evenings, which allow parents and carers to discuss learner reports in more detail and raise any questions or concerns.

### **Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The college provides highly effective and responsive support for its learners.

Support staff and teachers promote the wellbeing of their learners very well. Nearly all teachers are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable learners. Where learners face challenges that negatively impact their wellbeing, support staff provide personalised support to help learners manage their circumstances effectively.

The college has established very strong working relationships with educational organisations, charities and social support services. They work together coherently to support individual learners very well. For example, a well-established programme to support learners with autistic spectrum disorder secures a high standard of care for these learners.

The college is highly effective in identifying and developing its most able learners. These learners benefit from a very wide range of valuable activities including personal coaching, visits to outside institutions and wider academic enrichment. For example, the college regularly holds a broad range of subject specialist masterclasses. These are delivered by guest speakers from universities alongside college teachers. They explore exciting topics and skilfully nurture more able learners' passion for their chosen subjects. Over 100 learners regularly attend such activities, alongside pupils from neighbouring schools who are part of the local Seren network. These learners are particularly well prepared to apply for university places where entry is highly competitive. Industry professionals also deliver valuable masterclasses to vocational learners.

Prospective learners benefit from comprehensive, clear advice from college support and teaching staff. The college provides effective support for learners who are uncertain about their chosen pathways.

The college has introduced useful systems for sharing information with learners. Learners can use their mobile devices to quickly and conveniently access their learning records and track their progress.

There is a useful focus on helping learners develop their entrepreneurial skills. With guidance from the college, three learners have recently successfully established their own small businesses.

The college promotes healthy living well. It has introduced a wide choice of healthy food options across all campuses and physical activity sessions that specifically cater for less active learners.

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

**Learning environment: Good**

The college has established a positive and inclusive ethos. There is a useful training programme to ensure that staff have a sound awareness of equality and diversity. All new staff undertake equality training as part of their induction and all staff have received training in the 'Prevent' duty.

The college has a range of worthwhile initiatives to address gender stereotyping in the courses it provides. For example, the college holds 'girls only' taster days and 'girls into engineering' Saturday clubs where girls have an opportunity to undertake activities across different aspects of engineering, including motor vehicle, digital technology and engineering technology. This has resulted in an increase of the numbers of girls undertaking engineering courses over the last three years.

International students integrate well into college life and receive helpful support, for example by providing English language support and by raising awareness in the college of their culture and background.

Classrooms, workshops and laboratories across campuses are fit for purpose, well-resourced and accessible. However, the lack of sufficient sound proofing in a few music rooms results in the interruption of sessions in other classes.

The new library at Tycoch is modern, spacious and well-resourced. It usefully includes areas for quiet working and personal study as well as for group discussion. Many learners make effective use of this facility and receive valuable support from the library staff to help with study skills, research and completing assignments.

The Broadway centre provides modern and well-presented hair and beauty facilities. Recent investment in a new spa has increased opportunities, in particular for those learners who are undertaking higher national certificate and higher national diploma courses.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Leadership: Good**

Leaders and managers have clear roles and responsibilities and provide clear direction to staff. They use a broad range of methods, including video messages, to communicate well with other managers and with staff. Deans meet with learning area managers regularly to brief them on the outcomes of senior management meetings and strategic developments, and to challenge the performance and progress of provision. In these meetings, they provide a valued and helpful coaching and mentoring function.

At learning area level, managers and co-ordinators have well-defined roles and clear lines of reporting. Managers are supportive and approachable and are effective in challenging underperformance. Course leaders have appropriate involvement in curriculum planning and evaluation.

The college has a clear and well-focused strategic plan. This is supported by annual plans that set out specific targets and objectives. Progress towards these objectives is reviewed and monitored regularly. The college takes good account of emerging markets. For example, it has begun providing learning in HM Prison Swansea. Leaders respond well to labour market trends and skills forecasts to plan provision, such as in relation to the potential development of a tidal lagoon. Financial planning takes measured risks in its investment, supporting the college to make effective progress toward its aims.

Planning takes unforeseen developments into account well and is flexible enough to enable the implementation of effective contingency plans. For example, leaders and managers responded very well to the recent fire, which damaged a substantial part of the college's estate, destroying teaching areas and learning resources. Leaders and managers acted decisively to reorganise facilities, co-ordinate reconstruction work, communicate and support staff, and enable learners to resume their studies within a week. This prompt action ensured that there was no adverse effect on learners' success rates, which in health and care courses – one of the most severely affected areas – improved from the previous year.

There are appropriate systems to deal with complaints, tracking their outcomes and clearly recording how the college responded. The college presents informative reports on complaint outcomes to the board of governors annually.

The board of governors contains a wide range of strategic expertise. Governors are well informed about college priorities and make an effective contribution to challenging leaders and managers. Governors are linked to curriculum areas, helping them to develop a good insight into teachers' and learners' needs and priorities. They provide effective oversight and support to college's policy development and strategic planning.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The college has an appropriate cycle of quality management, which ensures that staff and learners make valuable contributions to self-evaluation and quality improvement processes. Senior managers maintain clear links between strategic and curriculum planning and quality improvement initiatives, through a consistent focus on the college's four core strategic directions of learner, quality, impact and excellence.

Senior managers make sound use of data for self-evaluation. However, curriculum managers and teaching staff do not use data well enough to monitor aspects of learners' performance and in evaluating their own provision. As a result, the quality of learning area reviews is too variable.

A majority of self-assessment reports of learning and functional areas, including governance, are overly descriptive and not evaluative enough. This results in half of self-assessment judgements at learning area level, and a minority of judgements in the whole college self-assessment, being over generous when compared to judgements of the inspection team. Many quality improvement plans are generally effective in identifying key actions for improvement. However, target setting for improvement is not yet consistent or precise enough in a minority of areas.

Senior managers are beginning to use recently developed data dashboards covering a useful range of key indicators to undertake useful moderation of self-assessment findings. This has resulted in appropriate challenge and revisions to a few proposed judgements at course and learning area level. Many managers provide robust challenge when identifying under-performing courses, especially through the use of special quality improvement panels. This has led to a significant, and in some cases rapid, turnaround in performance on a few courses. Senior and middle managers also make difficult decisions, such as withdrawing courses from the curriculum offer, where it is necessary and appropriate to do so.

The college has strong arrangements for engaging learners in feedback and quality improvement initiatives. In many cases these have a positive impact on the quality of provision, especially in areas such as improving resources for learning and, in a few cases, on improving teaching and assessment practices. Arrangements for feeding back to learners the outcomes and impact of their views and suggestions are effective. Recent actions arising from these arrangements include improvements to the quality of teacher feedback on learners' work and significant investment in improving Wi-Fi coverage across the college.

Since the last inspection in 2012, the strengthening of quality management systems and processes has had a positive impact on learner outcomes at college level and across many curriculum areas. Overall, success rates of academic programmes are strong and the overall performance on vocational programmes has risen steadily from being below the national average to coming in line with the national average.

### **Partnership working: Excellent**

The college has very strong partnerships with a wide range of local and regional employers, the local authority, other colleges and universities. These bring benefits to learners through providing opportunities to apply their skills, engage in useful work-related education and access further and higher education.

The college has well-established relationships with many small and medium employers and major companies across the region. These employers value the responsiveness and flexibility shown by the college to meet their diverse skills needs.

Many learning areas make particularly effective use of partnerships with employers to enrich the learning experiences of their learners, which would be useful to them in gaining employment. For example, the college's partnership with the Grand Theatre in Swansea enables learners on a one year performing arts course to receive tuition from drama professionals. These experiences challenge learners to apply and develop their skills, helping them to collaborate in productions and to become more confident in their characterisation.

The college has very positive relationship with local schools. Nearly all schools welcome the support of college staff in broadening learners' awareness of post-16 progression opportunities.

Since September 2017, the college has been delivering three A levels and a vocational course at a local 11-18 secondary school to broaden the option choices for their learners. It is, however, too early to assess the impact of this partnership on these learners' outcomes.

An outstanding feature of the college's partnership working is how it works with schools across the county of Swansea to increase the breadth and quality of vocational choices available to 14 to 16-year-old pupils. Approximately 300 pupils participate in the 'junior college' initiative, providing entry level, level 1 and level 2 vocational courses in areas such as hair and beauty, engineering, motor vehicle, plumbing and childcare. In addition the 'kickstart project' provides a wide range of activities for vulnerable pupils at risk of becoming NEET. Many pupils who participate in these programmes progress to college.

The college benefits from new partnerships with a few higher education institutions, to develop and deliver a small number of higher education in further education courses. This has enabled learners who would not normally access higher education the flexibility to be able to undertake a programme at the college.

### **Resource management: Good**

The college takes a prudent approach to financial and estates planning, with the underlying principle that development work is funded from surpluses in the core college budget. Monitoring systems are robust and budgets are closely scrutinised by governors. Financial planning is judicious.

The allocation of resources is linked well to the strategic plan. Senior managers take a flexible and entrepreneurial approach to developing buildings to respond to economic opportunities and changing business needs. The college takes a regional lead and is effective in seeking external funding. Over the past four years, the college has spent considerable self-generated funding on developing buildings and ICT infrastructure without borrowing.

The college responded swiftly and efficiently to the serious fire in 2016 and, as a result, outcomes for learners were not adversely affected. The college has taken a thoughtful approach to refurbishing damaged buildings. For example, the refurbished learning resource centre is of a high standard that meets learners' needs well.

Senior managers monitor budgets regularly and direct resources appropriately to areas of need. The college has increased staffing, including learning support staff, and employs an appropriate number of well-qualified staff to deliver the curriculum.

The college has recently introduced a new teaching and learning strategy. This is beginning to strengthen links between the observation of teaching and learning, performance management and continuous professional development. However, links between these processes are not yet fully effective and it is too early to evaluate the impact of the strategy on improving the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Regular corporate college training days allow worthwhile opportunities for staff to share good practice.

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

## Learning Area reports

### Skills

#### Learning area context

The learning area of skills covers literacy, numeracy and digital literacy essential skills Wales (ESW) classes, GCSE and pre-GCSE classes in mathematics, numeracy and English, discrete skills sessions linked to main programmes and one to-one support. Learners also develop their skills through their main programmes of study and through the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

The college uses the national initial and diagnostic assessment tool, the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST), to identify learners' skills needs. Initial assessment results for 2017 show that 72% and 70% of learners have literacy and numeracy skills, respectively, at level 1 or below.

#### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in learners' skills
- R2 Improve attendance at skills classes
- R3 Improve the quality, precision and monitoring of target setting to ensure that learners' targets are relevant to their ability, course and development needs
- R4 Review programmes to ensure all learners have suitable opportunities to achieve appropriate skills qualifications by the end of their programmes
- R5 Improve the planning and delivery of skills' in learning programmes and ensure that all teachers use learners' assessment outcomes effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of learners
- R6 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in skills lessons

#### Main findings

##### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

##### Judgement: Adequate

Nearly all learners complete a literacy and numeracy initial assessment at the start of their course and most complete a more detailed diagnostic assessment. Many also complete an initial assessment to establish their competence in digital literacy. Learners use the information from these assessments appropriately to set broad targets for improvement and many monitor these suitably. However, the targets set are not short term or precise enough. As a result, too many learners are not able to articulate their particular areas for development well enough.

In dedicated skills lessons, many learners recall their prior knowledge well and the majority make sound progress. However, in these lessons, a minority of learners do not make sufficient progress.

Nearly all learners listen carefully to explanations and most work successfully in groups and individually on their tasks. The majority of learners across all learning programmes contribute well to class discussion and explain their ideas clearly. For example, in performing and visual arts, learners justify their creative choices and explain why they have chosen specific techniques successfully. However, when given the opportunity, a minority of learners' responses, particularly in skills lessons, are brief and underdeveloped.

Most learners present their written work well. Many write appropriately for a suitable range of purposes. In particular, those working at higher levels make accurate word choices and use subject specific terms well in their writing. Many learners spell appropriately for their age and ability. However, a minority do not write independently confidently. For example, they make incorrect word choices or do not consider their audience well enough, or their writing lacks sufficient structure.

Many learners show a sound understanding of the texts that they read from a range of sources, for example from manuals or research. In a few learning areas, many level 3 learners synthesise information effectively from a range of sources. However, a few learners do not summarise or synthesise well enough.

Most learners have a sound understanding of numeracy tasks in skills sessions. The majority use calculators appropriately to work out simple calculations for real life problems. In a minority of learning areas, many learners develop their numeracy well in naturally occurring contexts, for example by using formulas to calculate averages or analysing data using government statistics. However, a minority of learners across all programmes do not develop their numeracy well enough in context and, in a few areas, they work at levels below their skill level. A minority of learners rely too much on calculators to carry out basic calculations.

In a few learning areas, many learners use a suitable range of digital tools to complete tasks on their main programmes of study. However, overall, few learners develop their digital literacy skills well.

Nearly all learners enjoy coming to college and behave well, and many have positive attitudes to their learning. However, in just under half of skills lessons, rates of attendance are too low.

## **Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

### **Judgement: Adequate**

The college offers a wide range of opportunities for learners to improve their literacy and numeracy skills on GCSE and other pre-GCSE and vocational courses. These pathways provide clear progression routes. However, a few learners in their final year of study do not have sufficient opportunity to achieve a skills qualification.

Learners and personal tutors set literacy and numeracy targets appropriately using the WEST initial assessments. However, learners' individual learning plans do not

identify their targets for GCSE or pre GCSE programmes, and progress against targets is not reviewed regularly enough. In addition, teachers do not make enough use of learners' targets to prioritise areas for development and ensure that learners are working effectively at the right level to improve their outcomes.

In skills lessons, most teachers know their learners well and have up-to-date subject knowledge. They develop good working relationships with learners. Many teachers keep useful individual records of learners, especially those with additional learning needs. Where available, they make effective use of in-class support, especially for those learners that have additional learning needs. The majority use a suitable range of resources to engage and challenge learners. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not challenge learners well enough and the pace of learning is too slow. A minority of teachers do not use a wide enough range of questioning techniques to probe and develop all learners' understanding. In addition, provision in a minority of skills lessons outside of GCSE programmes is not linked well enough to their main programmes of study and, in a few cases, relies too heavily on the use of WEST resources.

A majority of teachers in learning areas provide suitable opportunities for learners to practise their skills in naturally occurring contexts. For example, in business studies and law, teachers use case studies appropriately to develop learners' communication skills. However, there is too much variability within and between learning areas in how well teachers plan to develop learners' skills within relevant contexts.

The majority of teachers across learning areas provide suitable feedback to learners about the technical accuracy of their written work. However, many teachers in skills sessions do not explain to learners how to improve their work well enough.

There are suitable opportunities for learners to enhance their knowledge about global citizenship and sustainable development, for example when comparing articles regarding human rights and immigration. However, provision for sustaining and improving learners' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped.

Teaching rooms are fit for purpose and are well-resourced. The library is well-stocked with a wide range of relevant texts.

Business, Administration and Law
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### **Learning area context**

The learning area provides a wide range of courses in business management, administration, law, finance and accounting. Most courses are delivered at the Gorseinon and Tycoch sites. Higher education courses and corporate and professional training programmes are also delivered at Sketty Hall, although these are not in scope as part of this inspection.

The inspection of this learning area focuses on vocational programmes. The college also offers a range of AS and A level courses in business related subjects. These courses are inspected through the inspection area relating to A levels.

The learning area represents about 10% of the college's total provision.

## **Learning area recommendations**

- R1 Improve success rates in underperforming programmes
- R2 Make sure that all learners arrive on time for lessons
- R3 Increase the use of bilingual learning materials and take up of Welsh medium assessment
- R4 Increase the use of extended questioning to stretch and challenge all learners

## **Main findings**

### **Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

#### **Judgement: Good**

Success rates for vocational main qualifications in business, administration and law improved significantly from 70% in 2014-2015 to 83% in 2015-2016. This represents an improvement from well below the national average in 2014-2015 to three percentage points above the national average in 2015-2016. Published data for 2016-2017 indicates a further improvement in the overall success rate when compared to the previous year.

Learners studying qualifications at level 3 or above achieve consistently strong outcomes. However, learners' success rates on a few level 1 and level 2 programmes perform below the national averages. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional learning needs perform well and achieve similar success rates to other learners.

Many learners make effective progress in lessons and a few make very strong progress. Most recall previous learning well and a majority apply knowledge and understanding effectively when completing new and unfamiliar tasks, such as preparing accounting statements.

Many learners undertaking fast-track programmes in criminology or business make strong progress, often after achieving disappointing grades in AS courses. The grades achieved on these programmes allow them to progress to higher education within the original expected timescale, despite the setbacks experienced in their first year. A majority of learners progress to higher levels of study, including higher education or apprenticeships.

Most learners have a sound understanding of their literacy and numeracy targets and their progress towards achieving these. Most learners use word processing and presentation software applications effectively in their work. A few learners on accountancy courses make effective use of spreadsheet functions, such as logical IF functions, when undertaking financial analysis.

Most learners' written work is presented well with correct spelling and appropriate punctuation. Many respond well to feedback from their teachers and use this appropriately to improve the standards of their work in order to attain higher grades. In a few programmes, learners show strong digital literacy skills.

While most learners show a sound understanding of the business environment in Wales, few learners sustain or improve their Welsh language skills in relation to their prior learning.

Nearly all learners are positive about being healthy and safe in college. On most courses, learners attend well. However, a few learners do not arrive on time for lessons. This results in delayed starts to a few lessons.

Most learners participate well in lessons and enjoy their learning. They behave well and show respect to their peers and teachers. However, a few learners do not remain focused on learning activities during lessons and are too easily distracted.

Many learners who undertake the Welsh Baccalaureate participate in worthwhile community-based activities and use these effectively to develop valuable social and life skills.

## **Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area plans its curriculum effectively and offers a comprehensive range of programmes to suit the entry qualifications and progression needs of learners.

Most teachers demonstrate thorough subject knowledge and draw on their skills and industrial experience well. Many teachers plan lessons effectively and, as a result, learners generally make strong progress. Nearly all teachers have a strong rapport with learners and most use a range of suitable teaching and learning strategies to engage learners. A majority of teachers make valuable use of information learning technology in sessions, and, in a few programmes, learners show good digital literacy skills. However, a few teachers lack the skills to make the most beneficial use of technology.

Most teachers make effective use of learners' individual learning plans to track each learner's progress and to communicate concerns to personal tutors. They give comprehensive feedback on summative assessments, which are used with learners to set appropriate targets to improve. A majority of teachers use direct questioning effectively. However, only a few use extended questioning skilfully with more able learners to draw out responses of greater depth.

Nearly all teachers develop learners' literacy skills appropriately within lessons. In a few sessions, teachers include basic numeracy tasks in an appropriate vocational context. However, in many cases the complexity of tasks does not extend and develop higher level numeracy skills. While many teachers identify in their planning where skills will be generally developed, only a minority plan in detail for opportunities for learners to learn, practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

In many lessons, teachers raise learners' awareness of the Welsh business environment effectively. Many classroom displays are bilingual, and motivating phrases are prominently displayed on the walls in most areas, especially at the Gorseinon campus. All learners are offered the opportunity to be assessed through the medium of Welsh but too few take this option.

Most classrooms are well-presented, and many include relevant business displays. Nearly all classrooms are well-equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards.

## Health and Social Care and Childcare

### **Learning area context**

The learning area of health and social care and childcare offers a broad range of courses from level 1 to level 5, including an access to nursing course for adult learners.

The inspection of this learning area focuses on vocational programmes. The college also offers AS and A level courses in health and social care. These courses are inspected through the inspection area relating to A levels.

The provision is delivered mainly at the Tycoch and Gorseinon campuses and represents about 18% of the college's total provision.

### **Learning area recommendations**

- R1 Increase opportunities for learners to improve their digital literacy skills
- R2 Share best practice more effectively to improve quality and consistency of teaching

### **Main findings**

#### **Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

#### **Judgement: Good**

In 2015-2016, learners on many courses successfully completed their main qualifications at rates above the national average. Overall, successful completion rates for the last two years show improvement. However, successful completion rates on a few courses, for example the level 1 diploma in health and social care, have declined or are below the national average. Published 2016-2017 data indicates that overall success rates for main qualifications show slight improvement from the previous year.

Nearly all learners make strong progress in their studies. Nearly all learners produce a high standard of work in their portfolios. Most learners engage well in lessons and are able to complete a high standard of written tasks. However, in a few lessons learners do not work independently and, in these lessons, a few learners are passive or not fully engaged.

Most learners describe their experiences in their work placements in detail and apply these experiences fluently to their classroom activities. Many learners are confident and display sound speaking and listening skills.

Nearly all learners undertake an initial diagnostic assessment for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Most learners have clear targets relating to attendance and

coursework, which they manage effectively using their electronic individual learning plans. However, learners are not always clear what their literacy and numeracy targets are or what they need to do to improve. Only a few learners develop their digital literacy skills well.

Many learners develop useful Welsh language skills. For example learners on a level 2 childcare course learn Welsh phrases and sentences, speak confidently together in groups and practise how to apply their Welsh in workplaces with young children who are Welsh speakers.

Nearly all learners are well-motivated and keen to learn. Most learners attend and behave well in class. Many learners take part in a variety of activities, which develop social skills and promote health. For example, childcare learners participate in organising an annual children's party and health students provide an afternoon tea for a community group for people with dementia. Many learners participate in cross college fitness activities such as zumba and pilates.

## **Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area offers a wide and flexible range of full and part time courses at all levels. For example, the level 2 diploma in children's care learning and development can be studied on a full-time, part-time course or as an apprenticeship. The range of courses meets the needs of the learners and employers well.

The learning area has well-established links with a wide range of employers. Teachers arrange a programme of work placements with local schools and nursing homes for nearly all learners, including those learners on level 1 courses. These work placements provide learners with valuable skills, such as increased confidence and team working, as well as enhancing learners' vocational skills, keeping them up to date with current sector practice and developing useful links to gain employment.

Nearly all teachers demonstrate up-to-date subject knowledge, which they use well to plan lessons. Most teachers deliver stimulating, interactive and enjoyable lessons. Many use effective questioning techniques and encourage independent learning. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not challenge learners to work or think independently enough and, in these lessons, a few learners become passive or do not engage fully.

Many learners benefit from a taught Welsh language lesson, as part of their curriculum, that develops language skills for the workplace. For example, childcare learners learn key words and sentences that they can use in their vocational practice.

Nearly all teachers have good working relationships with their learners. They know their learners well and are able to provide suitable support to motivate and encourage them. Teachers identify learners with additional learning needs effectively through their group profiles.

The learning area has recently developed a more able and talented programme for level 3 health and social care learners. The aim of the programme is to encourage learners to raise their aspirations. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this programme on learners' outcomes.

Almost all classrooms reflect the learning area well, with stimulating and attractive wall displays, many of which are bilingual. Many classrooms are well-equipped with up-to-date technology.

## Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies

### Learning area context

The learning area delivers courses in electronic engineering, mechanical engineering and motor vehicle engineering. Courses are offered from level 1 to level 5, with a wide range of full time and part time courses for employed, apprenticeship and school link learners.

The inspection of this learning area focuses on vocational programmes from level 1 to level 3. The college also offers AS and A level courses in engineering related subjects. These courses are inspected through the inspection area relating to A levels.

Engineering and manufacturing technologies courses represent approximately 6% of the college's provision. Engineering courses are delivered on the Tycoch and Gorseinon campus in specialist engineering facilities.

### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve learners' success rates in courses with trends below the national averages
- R2 Improve opportunities for learners to sustain and develop their Welsh language skills
- R3 Improve the consistency of teaching by identifying and sharing best practice

### Main findings

#### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

#### Judgement: Good

Over the last two years, the learners have successfully completed their qualifications at good rates. Published data for 2016-2017 shows that the overall success rates of learners on most courses have continued to be maintained. Over the last three years, learners on level 3 courses have performed particularly well. However, at level 1 and level 2, a few courses have success rates below the national averages.

Many learners make strong progress in practical classes and develop a wide range of industry-related skills. They demonstrate confidence and competence when undertaking tasks in their engineering specialism. Mechanical engineering learners use lathes and milling machinery to machine components to accurate tolerances and electronic engineering learners produce complex circuit boards. Motor vehicle learners undertake a wide range of servicing and maintenance tasks to industry standards. Most learners build on their previous learning well to undertake more complex tasks as their ability and understanding develops.

In theory classes, many learners develop their theory knowledge well and make sound progress towards their qualifications. A few make particularly strong progress and develop higher level knowledge of more complex engineering principles. The majority of learners answer questions correctly, using the appropriate technical terms and phrases. In nearly all sessions, learners work well together and with their peers. As a result of developing a wide range of work-related skills, many learners develop the attributes to gain and sustain employment.

Nearly all learners undertake an initial assessment for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Many are clear what their literacy and numeracy improvement targets are, and what they need to do to improve. Many learners present their work well using correct spelling and punctuation. Most develop their numeracy skills well and develop their confidence when completing a wide range of engineering calculations.

Only a very few learners sustain or develop their Welsh language skills through their learning programmes.

Most learners are enthusiastic and motivated to complete their course and many are keen to progress to the next level. They demonstrate particularly high levels of respect for each other and their teachers. In nearly all sessions, learners work well together and with their peers. They are attentive and listen to the views of others respectfully. As a result of attending their courses many learners improve their confidence and self-esteem. In practical workshops, learners show a clear understanding of health and safety. In classrooms, workshops and around the provision, learners behave particularly well. Learners attend well across the engineering provision.

## **Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area offers a broad curriculum and has a clear focus on the development of learners' engineering and employability skills. Nearly all teachers encourage learners to progress to higher level courses, higher education or apprenticeship programmes. Many courses have beneficial links to industry and a majority of learners access worthwhile work experience.

Most teachers demonstrate relevant subject knowledge and draw on their skills and industrial experience to good effect. They have high expectations of learners and support them to develop their practical skills and theory knowledge well. Many teachers clearly link the relevance of workshop and classroom activities to working in the engineering industry. As a result, learners are well-prepared for progression into employment. However, a few sessions lack pace and challenge and, in these, teachers do not use extended probing questions to test and challenge learners well enough.

Many teachers develop learners' skills well, particularly in workshops and classroom sessions where literacy, numeracy and information and communication development opportunities occur naturally. However, in a few sessions, teachers do not plan clearly enough how to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Overall, teachers in the learning area do not provide enough opportunities to develop or sustain learners' Welsh language skills.

Most teachers plan assessments well and maintain up-to-date tracking records. Most teachers and learners use electronic individual learning plans effectively to track learners' progress, give summative feedback and set assessment and skills targets.

Teachers reinforce health and safety appropriately, particularly in practical lessons. Most classrooms and workshops are well-resourced and maintained with equipment that meets the needs of learners.

## A levels

### Learning area context

The college's A level provision is based at the Gorseinon campus. It caters for the majority of the city's A level learners. Around 1,400 learners are currently enrolled onto AS or A level programmes. The learning area also caters for approximately 40 fee paying international learners.

The college offers a range of around 40 A level subjects, as well as a broad programme of enrichment and extracurricular activities. In addition, it provides a pre-A level entry route for learners who wish to improve their GCSE grades. The college's entry requirement for A levels is seven GCSEs at grade C or better, with a few subjects having slightly higher requirements for specific GCSEs.

### Learning area recommendations

R1 Improve learners' grade attainment on underperforming courses

R2 Improve teaching strategies to ensure that learners of all abilities are challenged sufficiently in lessons

### Main findings

#### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

#### Judgement: Good

Over the three year period between 2014 to 2017, the proportion of learners who successfully complete their A levels and AS levels has been consistently strong. Successful completion rates have improved slightly and show trends above the national averages. Learners from economically disadvantaged communities and learners with disabilities successfully achieve their qualifications at rates in line with, or just below, that of their peers at the college. Across a majority of A level courses, learners achieve strong grades in relation to their prior GCSE attainment. On a few courses, grade attainment is very high. However, learners on a few courses do not consistently achieve good grades.

Nearly all learners have positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive in lessons and focus well on explanations and tasks. Most learners work diligently at an appropriate pace when working independently in lessons. Many make strong progress and a few make particularly strong progress.

Most learners recall prior knowledge effectively and many are able to apply their learning to new contexts well. A few learners gain valuable knowledge of wider research. For example, in psychology lessons, learners source and evaluate published case studies independently.

Many learners express themselves well as part of conversations in lessons. They accurately and confidently use subject specific and technical terminology when explaining their ideas. However, in a minority of lessons across the learning area, a few learners do not contribute actively to lessons and are reluctant to take part in group discussions.

For many subjects, learners regularly produce comprehensive written responses to tasks and questions. Many learners also annotate their subject notes skilfully with important points derived from classroom discussions and teacher exposition. However, a minority of learners' work is poorly organised and a few learners do not write in a sufficiently analytical way, particularly when reflecting on their own work.

In relevant subject lessons, most learners demonstrate sound mathematical ability and a majority demonstrate strong mathematical skills. In wider subjects, when opportunities arise, many learners are successful in solving numeracy problems. In a very few lessons, learners develop their digital literacy skills effectively. For example, in photography lessons, learners use industry standard software to skilfully edit and refine images.

In a few instances, learners actively engage with opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills. For example, as part of music and drama activities, learners prepare and deliver bilingual performances.

Many learners are ambitious and they have a clear understanding of their progress relative to their target grades. The majority of learners actively engage with the college's valuable extracurricular activities to support their personal and academic development. A minority attend a variety of local and national events linked to their extracurricular activities or their studies. A level learners are particularly well-informed and prepared for the university applications process. Many move on to courses at a range of universities, including those with highly competitive entry.

## **Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area offers an extensive range of advanced level courses that meet the needs and aspirations of nearly all learners. Learners also benefit from valuable opportunities to study for a wide range of additional qualifications that help them progress to higher education and employment. For example, they can choose to undertake the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, the Extended Project Qualification or professionally accredited programmes such as the Association of Accounting Technicians. Furthermore, access to A levels in minority subjects, such as ancient history and classics, provides learners with opportunities to create highly tailored combinations of subjects.

Learners benefit from an extensive range of enrichment activities and links with external partners. These provide them with high-quality experiences that enhance their skills and broaden their horizons. For instance, a comprehensive enrichment programme in the performing arts helps prepare learners for the higher education audition process.

Welsh medium tutorials provide valuable support for learners who wish to maintain or improve their Welsh language skills. Bilingual enhancement activities, such as drama workshops and music tutorials, give learners creative opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills. However, across the learning area, opportunities to increase learners' awareness of the language and culture of Wales are limited.

Nearly all teachers have a strong subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements. Most plan lessons suitably using a range of strategies that engage and interest learners. They use questioning well to test learners' understanding and recall of prior learning. The majority of teachers have high expectations of learners to achieve at the higher grades. A minority of teachers use highly effective questioning techniques to probe student responses and challenge them to extend their thinking and reasoning. A few teachers plan activities that challenge and stretch more able learners. For example, English teachers plan activities that involve learners in challenging academic debates about feminist and Marxist literary criticism. However, across the learning area, a minority of teachers do not challenge more able learners to develop their higher order and analytical thinking skills well enough.

In many lessons, teachers monitor progress effectively and provide useful verbal advice and guidance to help learners improve their work. In a few subjects, teachers develop learners' ability to evaluate the work of their peers skilfully. For instance, in photography lessons, teachers invite learners to review effective features in the work of past students. However, across the A level learning area, the quality of written feedback is too variable and does not robustly identify areas for improvement in learners' work well enough.

The learning area provides particularly strong pastoral and academic tutorial support for learners. This includes access to an extensive programme of specialist tutorials tailored to support progression to higher education, employment or training. For example, the college's medical tutorial and the 'futures academy' programme make an important contribution to supporting learners with their choices about future career options. Learners have access to a broad range of sporting activities and events that promote a healthy lifestyle.

The learning area provides comprehensive support for learners with additional learning needs (ALN). When required, learners with ALN receive highly effective personalised support from learning support assistants in lessons. This ensures that nearly all learners with ALN make sound progress and reach their goals. More able and talented learners have access to beneficial programmes, such as 'HE+' and 'Seren' that help them gain a beneficial insight into the expectations and challenges of studying at prestigious universities.

The learning area promotes an inclusive and supportive ethos. Learners feel valued as members of a diverse community that includes a significant international student population. All classroom and laboratory accommodation is well-equipped and suitable for purpose.

## Art and Design

### Learning area context

The learning area of creative arts offers courses in art and design, performing arts and creative media. Provision is based on two campuses, with provision at level 1, level 2 and level 3 at Llwyn y Bryn and provision at level 2 and level 3 at Gorseinon.

The inspection of this learning area focuses on vocational programmes. The college also offers AS and A level courses in creative arts subjects. These courses are inspected through the inspection area relating to A levels.

The learning area represents about 11% of the college's provision. On a few courses up to 50% of learners have additional learning needs.

### Learning area recommendations

R1 Improve learners' success rates in underperforming courses

R2 Improve learners' punctuality

R3 Increase opportunities for learners to sustain and develop their Welsh language skills

R4 Improve the quality of sound proofing in a few music rooms

### Main findings

#### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

#### Judgement: Good

In a minority of courses, up to half of learners come from areas of economic disadvantage. Learners who have to overcome considerable barriers in order to make progress in their learning attend a minority of courses. Most learners make strong progress in their learning, often from low starting points. They make rapid progress in assembling drama, dance and musical performances, using feedback and guidance from teachers to enhance their characterisation and performance. Where learners excel in their subject, tutors challenge them further to enhance performance and stretch their skills.

Nearly all learners reflect sensitively on the work that they and their peers do. They give constructive feedback to each other, which learners receive in a considered way. Learners set self-improvement targets regularly and additionally take good account of the feedback they receive from teachers to develop their expertise. Many learners take pride in their creative work which in most cases is of a high standard. They use specialist industry-standard equipment and software well, for example in producing and executing lighting designs for a theatre production and using image manipulation software to enhance their digital images to produce imaginative, abstract portraits to a high standard.

Many learners understand their literacy and numeracy targets and their progress towards them. Learners take account of teachers' feedback to correct their work and enhance their writing skills. Many learners demonstrate confident and precise use of complex subject-specific terminology. Learners progress well in measuring and performing calculations regarding the perimeters and areas of art work, using basic algebra and formulae.

Learners benefit from participating in a wide range of exciting community-based projects, such as contributing to a street art project. They also take part in enrichment opportunities and they recognise the value of these in the development of their own learning and aspirations.

Many learners develop a good understanding of Welsh culture. A few learners participate in an extra-curricular bilingual performance project in which they explore the value of bilingualism in a creative arts setting.

Nearly all learners show sensitivity and concern for the needs of others. In a minority of classes, a few learners are late.

Overall, learners' success rates are below the national averages. In 2016-2017 around half of level 3 diploma and extended diploma courses have success rates below the national averages. However, in the current year, retention rates for learners have improved.

## **Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area offers level 1 learners opportunities to develop a foundation of creative skills, whilst developing their literacy and numeracy. Most of these learners progress to level 2 provision. The learning area offers a broad range of provision at level 2 and level 3, enabling learners to follow courses that match their interests and to develop their talents.

The learning area has strong links with professionals from arts industries which add vocational value to learning. For example, more able and talented learners in performing arts receive tuition from acting professionals through the college's partnership with the city's main theatre. This tuition challenges their skills and prepares them well for auditions with drama colleges.

Most teachers plan sessions well, making effective use of a broad range of teaching activities. Many use their professional experience, such as in radio production, to enhance the realism of teaching. In practical sessions, nearly all teachers have very high expectations of learners at all levels. They create a lively, challenging environment where they motivate and excite learners to extend their skills and performance.

Most teachers use learning resources well to engage and motivate learners. Most use questioning effectively to probe learners' understanding of topics, for example in developing critical thinking in relation to media ethics.

Nearly all teachers use the results of initial assessments for literacy and numeracy well to plan sessions. Useful 'maths matters' numeracy courses are contextualised well to learners' interests and vocational areas. These help learners to gain confidence in basic arithmetical skills, prioritising budgets and using measuring equipment.

Many teachers make suitable reference to Welsh ethos and culture. For example, teachers use Welsh sources in level 2 performing arts to devise a performance around the myth of Blodeuwedd. In a few classes, teachers engage with learners in Welsh. However, many teachers miss opportunities to promote awareness of the value of the Welsh language as an employment skill.

Most teachers mark work clearly and offer valuable advice on how learners can improve. Many teachers encourage learners to reflect on and evaluate their own and each other's work.

Nearly all teachers are clear about learners' additional learning needs, and take account of these in planning teaching. Nearly all teachers are sensitive to the needs of learners who may have mental health issues. Staff pay good attention to the pastoral needs of learners, supporting them well to overcome learning barriers. Recent strategies to improve learners' retention on a range of courses are having a positive impact, with the result that fewer learners drop out of courses at an early stage.

All teachers work in an inclusive way that encourages all learners to participate well and develop trust in each other and in staff. This helps learners to take risks in extending their performance and creative skills.

All accommodation is well-equipped and a few facilities offer state-of-art equipment. Dance facilities in Gorseinon are very good and there are good theatre facilities. Llwyn y Bryn is well laid out and provides good facilities and work areas. In many classes, learners use IT facilities and software that prepare them well for commercial environments. However, poor soundproofing in a few music rooms means that excess noise intrudes on other lessons.