



A report on
Pengwern College

Date of inspection: October 2014

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 23/12/2014

Context

Pengwern College is an independent specialist college providing education for up to 75 learners aged 16 to 25 with moderate to profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities and autistic spectrum conditions. The College is open for 52 weeks per year, with a 38 week educational programme. Learners can access placements for up to three years. There are currently 55 learners, 25 attend on a daily basis. The rest have residential placements.

The college is situated in a rural location in Rhuddlan, North Wales and hosts within its 23-acre environment a small farm and forest school.

The college aims to give learners the skills and confidence they need to move onto the next stage of their lives, whether they gain employment, move towards independent living or progress onto further study.

The curriculum provides opportunities for learners to develop their functional, vocational, personal, communication and employment skills. There are two pathways: exploring work and exploring independence. Each learner has an individual learning programme with access to accredited courses, work-based learning, communication enhancement programmes, independent life skills and enrichment activities.

In May 2014 the college was bought from Mencap by the Cambian group.

Summary

| | |
|---|-------------|
| The provider's current performance | Good |
| The provider's prospects for improvement | Good |

Current performance

Performance at Pengwern College is good because:

- learners make good progress and communicate well;
- all learners complete their learning programmes and gain a qualification;
- the college has a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy;
- all teaching is good;
- learners behave well and learners with the most challenging behaviour make significant improvement in managing their behaviour;
- care support and guidance are excellent; and
- there is very effective use of resources and technology to include all learners in all aspects of college life.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the proprietor, leaders and managers have a very clear vision for the college;
- leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the college's strengths and where it needs to improve;
- they provide excellent support and challenge to the college;
- the self-evaluation report is of good quality and links well to the quality development plan;
- the college has made a very good start in using data to inform planning for improvement;
- there is a staff team approach to improving outcomes for learners; and
- the proprietor respects and values the college's Welsh identity.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the achievement of male learners
- R2 Consider the introduction of vocational qualifications for specific employment
- R3 Make sure that literacy and numeracy is always included in learners' reviews
- R4 Focus more on assessment for learning across the college
- R5 Widen the consultation of stakeholders in self-evaluation
- R6 Further the use of data across the college to improve learner outcomes

What happens next?

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current quality development plan to show what action the college intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents and carers at the college.

Estyn will monitor the progress against the recommendations at the next annual monitoring inspection.

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?

Good

Standards: Good

It is not possible to compare the college's performance with national averages, as there is no benchmark data available. Learners' attainment and achievement are judged on an individual learner basis.

However, the college data shows that, in 2013-2014, all learners successfully completed their main learning programmes and achieved their qualification aim. Most learners achieved the qualification at their anticipated level.

Most learners make appropriate progress towards their learning targets in-line with their abilities.

Most more able learners achieve a relevant qualification in literacy and numeracy. Learners on non-accredited skills programmes improve their literacy and numeracy in small steps of learning and many learners achieve their literacy and numeracy targets. However, learner targets for literacy and numeracy do not consistently form part of the learner progress review. Overall, trends in progress demonstrate that literacy and numeracy outcomes against targets have improved over the last three years.

Many learners have achieved their personal development targets, particularly those for social skills, interaction with peers and improving behaviour. Outcomes for personal development show an improving trend over the last three years.

However, male learners, across all levels of ability, do not achieve as well as female learners in meeting their targets.

Many learners make steady progress in lessons. They understand their learning targets and are confident to select their chosen priorities. A majority of learners achieve the tasks set for them in lessons and complete the learning activity well. A few more able learners can recall prior learning accurately and describe tasks they have completed before.

Many more able learners make good progress in expanding their vocabulary and a majority speak clearly in line with their ability. Less able learners develop their communication well through sign and symbols and electronic devices. Many learners express likes and dislikes fluently. A few learners, when given choices, can explain the reason for their selection. Many learners listen well in class and follow simple instructions accurately. They develop useful skills in relation to personal care, such as manicuring nails and completing hygiene routines. A majority of learners develop their writing skills in accordance with their ability and a few learners show confidence in reading out to the class and presenting their work to others. A few more able learners transfer learning confidently to new situations.

Many learners develop their skills in numeracy well in small steps of learning. They count fluently and a few demonstrate steady progress in handling money. A very few learners use these skills in the college shop and in enterprise activities such as selling eggs from the college farm.

Learners gain valuable life skills from enrichment activities and work experience opportunities such as assisting staff in the small animal facility and working in the kitchen garden. They develop their independence skills effectively and learn how to manage daily tasks including how to stack a dishwasher and how to prepare vegetables.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all learners develop an appropriate understanding of healthy lifestyles. They make effective progress towards personal targets to make healthy food choices and to take regular exercise. Many learners take part in well-planned activity sessions at the end of each week in sports such as Zumba, swimming and gym fitness. A few less able and more able learners gain valuable experience through training with local football clubs and taking part in international competitions.

All learners feel safe in college and many are confident to approach key workers and senior staff if they need support, help or advice. A majority of more able learners demonstrate a thorough understanding of on-line safety when using technological devices and programmes. They show a suitable awareness of the dangers of social media.

Most learners attend lessons on a regular basis and attendance data is consistently high. Most learners are punctual to lessons. Where learners need to leave lessons for personal reasons, they return to learning as soon as appropriate.

Learners behave very well in lessons and around the college and become more mature in personal situations. Nearly all learners engage well in sessions. They enjoy their learning and remain on task throughout activities.

Members of the college council take a pride in representing their peers and show an interest in their roles. They are confident in their ability to influence issues at the college and that their views will be considered. They demonstrate a mature attitude when they are given reasons why their ideas may not be possible.

Many learners develop their social and life skills effectively. They engage well with the local community through their sports activities and social excursions for shopping and leisure. Most learners take an active part in the college community and enjoy college parties and discos. A minority of learners across the ability levels work well together in lessons and participate comfortably in paired and group work. A few learners show a high degree of regard, care and respect for their peers.

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| Key Question 2: How good is provision? | Good |
|---|-------------|

Learning experiences: Good

The college provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of the learners well and builds on their previous knowledge and skills. Learners have opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications over three years.

The college makes good use of a range of communication strategies to ensure that all learners are fully involved in their sessions.

There is an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. Across the college day, learners have many opportunities to develop these skills. Tutors use an extensive range of assessments to set appropriate literacy and numeracy targets for each learner.

The well-planned personal and social education programme is appropriate to the needs of young adults. This includes sex education. This programme makes a significant contribution towards improving learners' social and life skills and awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

The college plans motivating opportunities for leisure activities in the local community. This includes a disco for people with disabilities, a drama and dance group, and playing Boccia, a ball sport related to bowls, at a local sports centre.

There is a wide range of work placements of good quality in the local community and on the college site. Placements include retail, kennels, catering and horticulture. However, a few more able learners do not have enough opportunities to follow specific vocational qualifications in order to improve their chances of gaining specific employment.

The college pays good attention to the needs of learners whose first language is Welsh. Learners gain a useful understanding of sustainability through activities such as woodland management, animal care routines, composting and on-site recycling.

Teaching: Good

There are strong supportive relationships between all tutors, support staff and learners. Tutors and support staff work very well together as a team. They use a wide range of communication and information and communication technology (ICT) strategies to make sure that all learners take part in the sessions effectively.

Tutors plan engaging sessions that maintain learners' interest and enthusiasm very well. Their planning is carefully linked to baseline and on-going assessment. They expect learners to do their best, set challenging tasks and give good encouragement and praise. They give very clear instructions, set clear objectives and give learners valuable feedback on their performance. Support staff are fully involved in planning and contribute well to the sessions. Tutors use a wide range of activities and resources, often tailor-made, to hold learners' interest and keep them on task. They make good use of questioning to check learners' understanding. They manage behaviour skilfully and make flexible arrangements if learners are unsettled. As a result, they avoid confrontation and learners quickly return to their work. Tutors and support staff understand the need to give learners enough time to respond to questions.

The college uses a range of effective assessment to identify learners' abilities and areas of need. Staff use this information carefully to group learners and write individual learning plans of good quality, containing specific and measurable targets.

Learners of all abilities assess how well they have completed tasks and met their targets at the end of each session. However, there is not enough focus on how learners will decide on their next steps in learning.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The provision for care support and guidance is excellent and has a positive impact on learners' standards and wellbeing. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority. There is a strong focus on developing learners' independence and recognising their need to be valued as young adults.

Staff give learners exemplary support and guidance that is very well tailored to meet their individual needs. Learners have access to a wide range of specialist services, which support their health and wellbeing. The college therapy team provide very good quality innovative in-session support for individual learners and staff. They carefully review and adapt all college documentation so that all learners, including those with the most complex needs, can access the information. As a result, everyone is fully included in all aspects of college life.

There are very effective policies and procedures in place for managing and improving learners' behaviour. These are applied consistently by all staff in all sessions.

The college has recently improved its management of the group of learners with the most challenging behaviour. Staff in education and the care setting have received training and high-quality support from managers. As a result, they have introduced a more structured programme and adapted the environment. The impact of this work has been very carefully monitored and evaluated. Learners have responded very well and there is a significant reduction in the frequency and the severity of incidents. This strategic detailed approach to the reduction in incidents is sector leading.

The college identifies additional learning needs very well and gives learners valuable extra support. This support includes the use of technology such as tablet computers and using the eye to communicate.

The college's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The college is an inclusive community. It is a welcoming, calm and safe environment. There is a strong emphasis on respecting others and all learners have equal access to the curriculum and provision. There are a range of effective policies to ensure equality and deal with any form of discrimination.

Technology is used very effectively across the curriculum, in particular with learners with more complex needs. As a result, they can all access the curriculum easily, express themselves and communicate with staff and their peers.

The accommodation is of good quality and is very well maintained. The college site has a wide range of facilities that benefit the learners. These include animal livestock, greenhouses, art and music workshops and a farm. Resources, including ICT equipment, are of good quality and meet the learners' needs well.

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

Leadership: Good

The principal and the senior management team have established a clear vision for the college, which is shared by all staff. All managers have high expectations, which they communicate well to their staff. There are comprehensive plans and policies that focus well on meeting learners' needs.

Following the recent changes in ownership, staff have confidence in the company's plans for the college's future.

The college has a clear management structure and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. The principal and her team have developed a strong team ethos that focuses well on college improvement. Staff feel valued and are very well informed about management decisions.

Managers make good use of a well-structured performance management system to identify where staff are working well. They give these staff many opportunities to share their good practice in order to improve learner outcomes. Where staff are not working as well, managers provide appropriate support. As a result, staff improve their performance. Managers use the performance management system well to identify and plan individual and whole-college training needs.

Managers meet regularly with staff to discuss college improvement. All staff are fully involved and contribute well to these meetings. Minutes are comprehensive and clear.

The proprietors have an exceptional understanding of the strengths of the college and learner needs. They recognise and value the context of the college in Wales. They provide suitable challenge and support to the principal and her management team. They are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating learner outcomes.

The college meets national priorities very well. There is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy for vulnerable learners.

Good training is offered to all staff, both in-house and by external providers. A number of support staff are developing their practice by following externally accredited courses.

The college has successfully implemented all key recommendations from the last Estyn monitoring visit.

Improving quality: Good

Managers have developed a strong ethos of continuous improvement, which is shared by all staff. They have a very clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas for further development. They work very well together with staff to make sure that priorities are delivered. For example, they identified the need to improve the management of challenging behaviour across the college. Changes have been implemented successfully and have had a positive impact on learners' behaviour.

The self-evaluation report is of good quality. It is evaluative and comprehensive and includes relevant data. It clearly highlights the college's key strengths and areas for improvement. All staff and parents and carers were involved and contributed well to the process. Learners fed in their views through the college council. However, the report did not make enough use of feedback from other stakeholders such as social services and employers.

There is a clear link between the self-evaluation report and the quality development plan. The plan clearly identifies appropriate priorities and actions. However, it lacks clear timescales and specific responsibilities.

The college is steadily improving its use of data to identify areas for improvement. Currently, the college collects and uses data to identify whole college priorities and individual performance. This works well. However, the college does not use data well enough to evaluate the performance of groups of learners.

Partnership working: Good

The college works closely with a wide range of partners. These include mainstream secondary and special schools and the community liaison officer. There are also close links with charities and societies. There are strong links with local sporting clubs. This gives learners access to high quality coaching.

The college plans a range of joint initiatives to widen the experience of its learners. These initiatives raise the profile of the college and awareness of disabilities issues.

Partnerships with local schools are strong. Pupils at these schools with disabilities and/or additional learning needs benefit from accessing facilities at Pengwern College, and a range of social events is hosted by the college. However, Pengwern College learners do not benefit from using the facilities at these schools in return.

Transition into the college is very well managed. Learners from many schools visit the college to familiarise themselves with college life. College staff also visit learners' schools to observe and record how they access their curriculum. The college has strong partnerships with parents and carers. They are fully involved in decisions about their child's education and are well informed about their progress. The college uses social media well to establish effective links between college and home. Parents and carers are appreciative of the high levels of support they receive from the college. These close working arrangements ensure smooth transition into and moving on from the college. The college organises innovative open weekends for parents and carers of primary and secondary aged children with disabilities and/or additional learning needs. This gives them an understanding of the working of the college and increases learner referrals.

Resource management: Good

The college is appropriately staffed to deliver the curriculum. Tutors and support staff are deployed well to meet the needs of individual learners.

High quality facilities and resources are used effectively to match the interests and abilities of all learners. Managers make very good use of a carefully costed business plan to improve the college environment.

There are well-developed plans to upgrade areas of the college in order to improve the outcomes for learners.

Standards of provision and support are consistently good and the college makes sure that learners make good progress in their standards and wellbeing. As a result, the college provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

| | Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion | Agree Cytuno | Disagree Anghytuno | |
|--|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---|
| I feel safe in my college. | 39 | 38 97% | 1 3% | Rwy'n teimlo'n ddiogel yn fy ngholeg. |
| The college deals well with any bullying. | 36 | 35 97% | 1 3% | Mae'r coleg yn delio'n dda ag unrhyw fwlio. |
| I have someone to talk to if I am worried. | 39 | 38 97% | 1 3% | Mae gen i rywun i siarad ag ef/â hi os ydw i'n poeni. |
| The college teaches me how to keep healthy | 39 | 37 95% | 2 5% | Mae'r coleg yn fy nysgu i sut i aros yn iach. |
| There are plenty of opportunities at college for me to get regular exercise. | 42 | 40 95% | 2 5% | Mae digonedd o gyfleoedd yn y coleg i mi gael ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd. |
| I am doing well at college | 42 | 40 95% | 2 5% | Rwy'n gwneud yn dda yn y coleg. |
| The teachers help me to learn and make progress and they help me when I have problems. | 40 | 40 100% | 0 0% | Mae'r athrawon yn fy helpu i ddysgu a gwneud cynnydd ac maent yn fy helpu pan fydd gen i broblemau. |
| I have enough books and equipment, including computers, to do my work. | 40 | 33 83% | 7 18% | Mae gen i ddigon o lyfrau, offer a chyfrifiaduron i wneud fy ngwaith. |
| Learners behave well and I can get my work done. | 37 | 36 97% | 1 3% | Mae dysgwyr eraill yn ymddwyn yn dda ac rwy'n gallu gwneud fy ngwaith. |
| Staff treat all learners fairly and with respect. | 36 | 35 97% | 1 3% | Mae staff yn trin pob dysgwr yn deg ac yn dangos parch atynt. |
| The college listens to our views and makes changes we suggest. | 31 | 31 100% | 0 0% | Mae'r coleg yn gwrando ar ein barn ac yn gwneud newidiadau rydym ni'n eu hawgrymu. |
| I am encouraged to do things for myself and to take on responsibility. | 40 | 39 98% | 1 3% | Rwy'n cael fy annog i wneud pethau dros fy hun a chymryd cyfrifoldeb. |
| The college helps me to be ready for my next college or to start my working life. | 34 | 31 91% | 3 9% | Mae'r coleg yn helpu i mi fod yn barod ar gyfer fy ngholeg nesaf, neu i ddechrau fy mywyd gwaith. |
| The staff respect me and my background. | 38 | 37 97% | 1 3% | Mae'r staff yn fy mharchu i a'm cefndir. |
| The college helps me to understand and respect people from other backgrounds | 36 | 34 94% | 2 6% | Mae'r coleg yn helpu i mi ddeall a pharchu pobl o gefndiroedd eraill. |
| I was given good advice when choosing my courses | 5 | 4 80% | 1 20% | Cefais gyngor da wrth ddewis fy nghyrsiau yn y chweched dosbarth. |

Responses to parent questionnaires

| | Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion | Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf | Agree Cytuno | Disagree Anghytuno | Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf | Don't know Ddim yn gwybod | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Overall I am satisfied with the college | 23 | 14 61% | 9 39% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 0 | Rwy'n fodlon â'r coleg yn gyffredinol. |
| My child likes the college | 24 | 18 78% | 5 22% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 1 | Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r coleg. |
| My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the college | 24 | 18 75% | 6 25% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 0 | Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y coleg. |
| My child is making good progress in college | 22 | 15 71% | 6 29% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 1 | Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y coleg. |
| Learners behave well in college | 22 | 5 31% | 11 69% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 6 | Mae dysgwyr yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y coleg. |
| Teaching is good. | 23 | 10 53% | 9 47% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 4 | Mae'r addysgu yn dda. |
| Staff expect my child to work hard and do his or her best. | 24 | 11 52% | 10 48% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 3 | Mae'r staff yn disgwyl i fy mhlentyn weithio'n galed ac i wneud ei orau. |
| Staff treat all children fairly and with respect | 23 | 16 76% | 5 24% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 2 | Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch. |
| My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise | 22 | 10 48% | 11 52% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 1 | Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd. |
| My child is safe at college | 24 | 14 64% | 8 36% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 2 | Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn y coleg. |
| My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs | 23 | 11 52% | 10 48% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 2 | Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol. |
| I am kept well informed about my child's progress | 22 | 13 59% | 7 32% | 2 9% | 0 0% | 0 | Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn. |
| I feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions, suggestions or a problem | 23 | 14 61% | 9 39% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 0 | Rwy'n teimlo'n esmwyth ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r coleg, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem. |
| I understand the college's procedure for dealing with complaints | 24 | 13 65% | 5 25% | 2 10% | 0 0% | 4 | Rwy'n deall trefn y coleg ar gyfer delio â chwynion. |
| The college helps my child to become more mature and take on responsibility | 23 | 17 77% | 5 23% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 1 | Mae'r coleg yn helpu fy mhlentyn i ddod yn fwy aeddfed ac i ysgwyddo cyfrifoldeb. |
| My child is well prepared for moving on the next college or work | 17 | 6 50% | 6 50% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 5 | Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r coleg nesaf neu waith. |

| | Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion | Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf | Agree Cytuno | Disagree Anghytuno | Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf | Don't know Ddim yn gwybod | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| There is a good range of activities including trips or visits | 22 | 9 45% | 11 55% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 2 | Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau. |
| The school is well run. | 21 | 14 70% | 6 30% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 1 | Mae'r coleg yn cael ei rhedeg yn dda. |

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| Claire Yardley | Reporting Inspector |
| Gill Sims | Team Inspector |
| Michael Henderson | Peer Inspector |
| Kimberley Mortimer | Nominee |