



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**St David's Catholic College
Ty Gwyn Road
Cardiff
CF23 5QD**

Date of inspection: November 2010

by

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



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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Context

St David's Catholic College was founded by the Archdiocese of Cardiff as a Catholic sixth-form college in 1987. It is based on one campus in the north-east of Cardiff and provides learning opportunities for about 1,550 full-time learners. Enrolments have increased by about 36% over the last four years. Nearly all learners are aged 16 to 19.

The college states that its mission is to be 'a Catholic college for the community, to discover and realise the full potential of all, in an atmosphere of love, service and respect, inspired by Christ'. Fifty-six per cent of learners are from the Catholic community, 30% from other faiths and the remainder do not declare a faith. The college is part of a faith-based 14-19 partnership that includes denominational secondary schools in Cardiff. This year, the faith partnership accounts for about 5% of enrolments at the college.

Most learners at the college come from Cardiff, but about 13% come from further afield, including Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly and Bridgend. About 54% of learners are female and 46% male. About 22% of learners are from minority ethnic groups. About 2% of learners received their previous education at Welsh-medium secondary schools. About 42% of learners receive the educational maintenance allowance.

Just under 80% of enrolments are at level 3, with most on A2/AS level courses, and 27% mixing these courses with vocational courses. There is a wide range of A2/AS courses and there are vocational and applied courses at level 3 in art and design, performing arts, health and social care, sports development and fitness, information technology, business, administration and law, and science. About 18% of enrolments are at level 2, mainly in hairdressing, health and social care, and media. About 3% of enrolments are at level 1. All learners are studying towards the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. There is no work-based learning or adult community learning provision at the college.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Excellent
The provider's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

The current performance of the college is excellent because:

- standards achieved are often well above national comparators and similar institutions;
- overall success rates are high at all levels of study;
- learners often succeed at a level that is above predicted levels based on their previous attainment;
- many learners undertake key skills awards at appropriate levels and success rates are very good;
- the quality of support and guidance is excellent and has a significant impact on the achievement of high success rates; and
- the assessment and tracking of learners' progress are very good and the tutorial programme is very effective.

Prospects for improvement

The college's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- quality systems and action planning for improvement are very good;
- success rates have been consistently high for many years;
- there is robust and effective response to underperformance;
- leadership and management are highly effective;
- the analysis of performance data and benchmarking are very strong; and
- there has been a very proactive response to the findings of the last inspection.

Recommendations

The college needs to:

- R1 extend the range of teaching strategies to engage learners more fully in lessons;
- R2 adapt teaching strategies and resources to meet the range of learners' needs identified by teachers in lessons more effectively;
- R3 focus on more subject-specific issues in course reviews;
- R4 place more emphasis on the quality of learning in lesson observations undertaken by college staff; and
- R5 improve the way the student council communicates and engages with learners.

What happens next?

The college will integrate the recommendations from the inspection into the quality development plan it prepares for DCELLS.

Estyn has asked the college to prepare case studies of sector-leading practice in relation to its delivery of the Welsh Baccalaureate and key skills, its tracking of learners' progress through the electronic individual learning plan (eILP), and the impact of these on learners' progress and attainment.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

The rates at which learners complete and attain their qualifications (success rates) on most courses are above or well above those in other further education colleges in Wales. The college's overall success rates are high at all levels of study. The college has sustained this high level of performance over the last three years. Its overall performance places it among the highest-performing colleges in Wales. The college also performs very well when compared with outcomes for sixth-form colleges in England.

In 2008-2009, the overall success rate on level 3 courses was about 10 percentage points higher than the national comparator. Success rates were about eight percentage points higher on AS, A2 and level 2 courses. Learners' attainment on vocational courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 is excellent. For example, the proportion of learners achieving three distinctions in BTEC National Diploma courses in 2008-2009 is 97% compared to the national comparator of 27%.

Learners generally attain very well compared to predictions based on their previous GCSE attainment in schools.

Learners from relatively deprived socio-economic backgrounds and from minority ethnic groups attain very well. For example, as a group, the cohort of learners on AS and A2 courses who are in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance has an overall success rate above that achieved by those who do not receive the allowance.

The college enters many learners for key skills awards and many attain them. In 2009-2010, for example, 500 learners completed a key skill award in communication at level 3 and 80% attained the qualification. In the same year, 850 learners completed a key skill award in information and communications technology (ICT) at level 2 and 92% attained the qualification. Many learners attain all six key skills as a result of their successful participation in the Welsh Bacculaureate Qualification.

The rates at which learners complete and attain the Welsh Bacculaureate Qualification are broadly similar to other colleges, but these are strong outcomes in relation to the college's policy of entering all full-time learners for the qualification.

The progression rate from level 2 to level 3 courses is good and many learners successfully progress from level 3 courses into further or higher level study. The examination outcomes of learners who follow the college's honours programme for more able and talented learners are very good and many progress to universities where the competition for places is very high. The majority of level 2 learners on vocational courses who re-sit GCSEs in English, mathematics or science improve their examination outcomes well.

Many learners make good progress in developing their subject and/or vocational knowledge, skills and understanding. Many undertake research well and use online college materials to supplement and extend their learning. Many learners focus very well on meeting assessment objectives and their individual learning targets. Upper sixth learners in particular are very aware of what they need to do to improve to meet their target grades. Learners on the honours programme develop very good higher-order skills and receive a high level of challenge as they learn about and discuss a range of complex issues. In general, students develop their skills well, but they do not always develop their oral skills enough in all lessons.

There are few learners from Welsh-medium schools in the college. There is one Welsh-medium group of learners who use their Welsh language skills well in college on the Welsh Baccalaureate programme and in their tutorial sessions.

Wellbeing: Good

Learners enjoy coming to the college and generally participate well in classes. The behaviour and attitudes displayed by learners are very good. Many display good levels of enthusiasm and want to learn and to do well. Learners appreciate the value of their personal tutors challenging them to perform to the best of their ability.

Learners show a high level of care, respect and concern for each other. They listen attentively in class and are very tolerant of the views of others. They welcome the mature approach adopted towards them by the staff who they find approachable and very helpful.

Learners feel very safe in the college and appreciate and benefit from its friendly and supportive ethos. During the inspection, learners raised no concerns in relation to bullying or harassment.

The overall figure for attendance since the start of term is good at 91%. A few learners are late for lessons. Teachers challenge learners who are late, record lateness and take action where appropriate.

Learners engage in a wide range of community-based activities, charity work and activities focused on the Catholic mission of the college. Learners appreciate the purpose of course representatives, but are less clear on the role of the student council and its impact on college life.

All learners have ownership of clear targets that they set for themselves jointly with their tutors. Most learners develop good social skills and contribute well to the college community. Peer mentoring is a good example of the positive contribution learners make to the learning and development of others in the college.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Excellent

Overall, the curriculum offered by the college meets the needs of learners very well. Nearly all learners undertake the Welsh Baccalaureate and this meets the needs of

learners very well in widening their learning experiences whatever combination of subjects and courses they study. All learners follow the 'St David's core' based on an accredited course in religious education.

The college has increased the range and volume of vocational programmes at levels 1 and 2 very well in recent years. The percentage of provision at these levels has doubled from 10% to 20% since the last inspection in 2006, and there are now far more applied courses available at level 3. All learners have good opportunities to progress to the next level of study as well as to employment. The science department has devised a very effective on-line induction course to prepare learners for A level study in science subjects.

The college is part of a faith-based 14-19 partnership that includes denominational secondary schools in Cardiff. This year, the faith partnership accounts for about 5% of enrolments at the college.

All learners engage very well in work-related education and enterprise activities through the Welsh Baccalaureate and nearly all those on vocational programmes do an appropriate range of employer-based work experience.

The college offers an excellent 'Honours' programme for more able and talented learners. This prepares them particularly well for higher education. The programme includes Latin, key skills at level 4, an extended project based on detailed and independent research, and a community participation programme.

Most learners have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills in their courses. The college uses the results of diagnostic screening well to develop learning plans to meet learners' individual skills. The college offers a good range of provision for the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills through essential and key skills as well as free-standing units in mathematics and English. Level 2 learners have good opportunities to improve their GCSE grades in mathematics and English.

The college has made good progress in extending its provision for the small number of learners who received their previous education in Welsh-medium schools. These learners are able to undertake the Welsh Baccalaureate through the medium of Welsh and have a Welsh-medium tutorial group. All learners cover the Welsh dimension through the Welsh Baccalaureate programme. However, there are some missed opportunities to develop the Welsh language skills of learners and the Welsh dimension in a few academic subjects.

All learners have very good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and global citizenship through their studies on the Welsh Baccalaureate and the 'Honours' programme.

Teaching: Good

Teachers generally plan their lessons well and share clear aims and objectives for lessons with learners. Many lessons have a suitably wide variety of activities to engage learners. Many teachers use a good range of materials such as video clips, visual illustrations, reference to current specialist journals and oral stimuli to add

interest and relevance to learning. In most lessons, teachers make good links with previous learning activities. Overall, there is a good balance between teacher input and learner activity and many learners receive an appropriate level of challenge. Most teachers encourage learners to use correct subject and vocational terminology. Many are good language models and develop learners' literacy skills well.

However, in a minority of sessions, teachers dominate too much and learners are inactive for too long. In these lessons, teachers do not adapt their work enough to challenge the more able learners and to support learners who find it difficult to grasp some of the concepts involved.

Many teachers use questions well to test and to assess learners' knowledge and understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not direct questions enough at specific learners and, as a result, some learners do not participate enough in lessons.

Nearly all teachers mark and annotate learners' work carefully. They record their judgements very well in the college's electronic individual learning plan (eILP). This gives learners and their tutors comprehensive feedback on a range of issues affecting learners' progress on each individual course, such as their effort, attendance rates, standard of work, their minimum target grades and what they need to do to improve further.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The college has very good arrangements for care, support and guidance.

Learners receive comprehensive, clear and realistic pre-entry information and advice about the college and its courses. They receive good support to prepare them for the demands of their future study. For example, there is a Preparing for A-Level Science (PALS) course for pre-entry learners. This is an online course prepared by the college's science teachers to help learners to make the step up from GCSE to A level study. This has proved very beneficial to learners, especially those who have not studied separate science subjects at GCSE.

The college's pastoral system is highly effective and has a strong impact on many learners' high achievement. All learners meet their personal tutors twice a week in sessions that focus on a range of personal and social issues, such as cyber-bullying, wellbeing and the environment. They have regular individual progress reviews with their tutor. All learners are clear about where they can go to seek advice and value the support they receive.

The college's electronic individual learning plan (eILP) is a comprehensive record of learners' achievements and progress. Tutors use this information very well to challenge and to support learners. It is a highly effective process and staff and learners value it as a very effective way to report on learners' progress. Tutors use the information in the e-ILP well to identify learners who are at greater risk of dropping out. They target support at these learners to ensure that they continue to make progress on their programmes.

Learners with additional learning needs receive very effective support. College staff identify individual learning needs well at entry and tailor support to meet the needs of individual learners. The college's learning support unit ('The Hub') is highly effective in providing additional learning support for learners. Many college students volunteer as peer mentors to help their fellow students in one-to-one sessions in 'The Hub'. This support is strong and effective. The learning support team offers a variety of activities which promote inclusivity and engage learners and teachers through themed awareness weeks on topics such as dyslexia and mental health issues.

The college has appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The college provides an inclusive environment for all its learners and has a positive ethos. The college's mission, values and ethos celebrate and promote fairness and diversity. All learners have a good understanding of equality and show a high level of respect to each other and to staff. The college is highly effective in challenging any form of discriminatory behaviour.

The college provides a good environment for learning and learners have enough resources for their needs. The accommodation is maintained well and many rooms have stimulating displays of relevant materials. A few rooms are not large enough to allow a variety of small group work or a wide range of teaching strategies. The communal areas of the college are pleasant and the college chapel is a very good environment for reflection. However, the communal areas for learners are often over-crowded at peak times.

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

The senior leadership team provide excellent leadership and management. Managers and governors have worked very well together to develop appropriate strategic priorities which they review regularly and effectively. Senior managers have established a very strong ethos of tolerance, trust and support allied to high achievement.

The strategic direction of the college is very clear and places an appropriately high priority on improving quality and standards within a Catholic environment. The principal and senior management team have clear roles and responsibilities. Managers at all levels understand their roles well and carry them out effectively. In 2009, the college reviewed its staff structure and introduced programme area managers to replace course co-ordinators. This has improved communication between staff and managers very well.

Managers quickly identify underperformance in teaching and learning, and standards, and use a suitable range of interventions to support and to challenge staff to improve their practice and to raise standards.

Governors demonstrate a very good understanding of their roles. They are well-informed and give very good levels of support to the principal and senior management team. They provide positive and rigorous challenge to the principal and senior management team, especially in relation to the standards achieved by learners. The college has developed a detailed governor training and evaluation policy. Governor attendance at meetings and training events is very good.

The college meets national priorities well. The college works well with the local authority, feeder schools, other schools and colleges. The college plays an effective part in the Cardiff 14 to 19 partnership and faith-based cluster group. These strong partnerships have increased the number of vocational pathways available to learners. The college is a very active member of the Cardiff Transformation Planning Group which considers the implications of the Welsh Assembly Government's transformation agenda. The college has been very proactive in taking forward developments in relation to the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and in developing the key skills of learners.

Improving quality: Excellent

The college has very effective arrangements to monitor and to improve the quality of its provision for learners.

All staff understand their responsibilities in relation to quality matters and they review the quality of their courses regularly. Course and divisional reviews contain effective analyses of data and identify strengths and weaknesses effectively. Reviews do not always focus enough on the development of learners' course-specific knowledge and skills. Managers and college governors use these reviews very well to identify areas of underperformance and to challenge staff to improve the quality of their work.

Functional area reviews are detailed and provide an effective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of cross-college areas. These include the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, staff development and religious education. Self-assessment reports are detailed and are based on course and divisional reviews. Quality development plans identify priorities well and are a good basis to deliver the college's strategic priorities.

The college has effective systems to gather the views of learners. These include questionnaires, focus groups and class representatives. Course teams use these views well in their course reviews. The collection of employers' views is not so well-developed.

Staff and managers make very good use of performance data from a range of sources and use this very well to benchmark their performance against comprehensive schools, independent schools, sixth-form colleges and general further education colleges in Wales and in England. They analyse the performance of groups of learners very well, including analyses on the basis of gender, ethnicity and deprivation indices to make sure that learners are not disadvantaged and can achieve as well as they can.

The college has made very good progress in implementing all of the recommendations from the previous Estyn inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The college plays an active role in 14-19 developments in Cardiff and has developed good strategic partnerships with feeder schools, other schools and further education colleges in Wales and England. It has taken a leading strategic role in the Cardiff faith-based cluster group. There is a good level of trust at strategic and operational level between the college, its feeder schools and other further education colleges.

There is effective planning of provision post-16 to ensure appropriate progression from key stage 4. The use of a common option block ensures that a wider range of academic and vocational provision is available for learners in the faith group cluster.

There are clear protocols for partnership working and quality assurance arrangements. Staff work closely with other schools to ensure that learners on collaborative courses are closely monitored and home institutions are kept fully informed about learner attendance and progress. The college has led on the development of joint quality assurance processes. These include annual course review and analysis of outcomes by learner focus groups, parental surveys and observations of teachers within collaborative programmes.

The college participates in the Metropolitan Learning Conference (MLC) responsible for strategic developments and transformation proposals in Cardiff. This allows an appropriate strategic alliance between St. David's Catholic College, the proposed new Cardiff and Vale College, Cardiff schools and other partners.

The college has linked well with three Beacon colleges in England to share and develop systems for maintaining comprehensive electronic records of assessments of learners' work.

The college has participated well in the Estyn Peer Inspector training programme and the Colegau Cymru Peer Assessor training.

Resource management: Excellent

The college has an appropriate number of well-qualified and experienced staff to deliver the curriculum. Although teaching staff costs are higher than for other colleges in Wales due to its status as a sixth-form college, the college deploys staff well and makes very good use of their time and expertise. There are very effective systems to identify staff development needs and the college provides a wide range of staff development opportunities to meet the college's strategic objectives.

Managers use financial benchmarking very well to identify their performance compared to other colleges in Wales and to other similar institutions elsewhere. They use this information to direct resources to where they are needed. The college recognises that it has an ageing estate, but uses the available resources well to maintain a safe and welcoming environment and to make sure that staff and learners have access to the resources they need to maintain very high standards.

The college manages its finances well and has maintained a stable financial position in recent years, predicting a modest surplus this year.

The rates at which learners complete their courses and attain their qualifications are consistently above or well above other colleges in Wales. The attainment of higher grades in vocational courses is outstanding. Managers make very good use of the available resources to deliver courses where the outcomes for learners are often very high. The college provides very good value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner Satisfaction

Learners generally commented favourably on the college in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Responses were particularly favourable on the way staff help learners to make progress and to learn, on the personal support they receive from their tutors and on how well staff listen and respond to any views and concerns learners express. Learners feel very safe and free from harassment and responded very positively to the way the college helps them to understand and to respect people from different backgrounds. Ninety-three per cent of those who responded would recommend the college to others.

Appendix 2

F0009023 : St David's Sixth Form College

	2007-08			2008-09		
	Terminated Learning Activities	College Success Rate	National Comparator	Terminated Learning Activities	Success Rate	National Comparator
Success rates in long courses by sector/subject area						
Health, Public Services and Care	110	64%	67%	120	63%	76%
Science and Mathematics	1,090	81%	65%	1,110	83%	71%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	.	.	57%	.	.	74%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	55	82%	67%	60	75%	75%
Construction, Planning and the Built	.	.	71%	.	.	74%
Information and Communication Technology	240	83%	64%	240	77%	73%
Retailing and Customer Service	.	.	72%	.	.	74%
Hair and Beauty	25	40%	67%	20	50%	75%
Hospitality and Catering	.	.	68%	.	.	72%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	125	80%	69%	110	77%	78%
Performing Arts	80	88%	73%	45	89%	73%
Art and Design	335	84%	72%	350	91%	78%
History, Philosophy and Theology	1,410	17%	52%	320	86%	77%
Social Sciences	320	86%	74%	310	89%	76%
Welsh, English and Other Languages	510	78%	68%	490	87%	73%
Education and Training	.	.	65%	.	.	76%
Independent Living Skills	.	.	55%	.	.	78%
Foundation for Work	285	100%	65%	0	.	76%
Business, Administration and Law	270	85%	68%	295	85%	71%
Unspecified Sector/Subject Area	.	.	36%	.	.	70%
All Long Courses	4,850	64%	67%	3,470	84%	75%
Success rates by notional level, learning aim length						
Entry Level (long)	.	.	73%	.	.	80%
Level 1 (long)	.	.	69%	.	.	78%
Level 2 (long)	465	77%	65%	435	80%	73%
Level 3 (long)	4,315	62%	67%	2,965	84%	73%
Level 4 + (long)	.	.	53%	.	.	63%
Level not known (long)	.	.	39%	.	.	69%
All Long	4,850	64%	67%	3,470	84%	75%
All Short	0	.	77%	5	100%	85%
e-learning aims	.	.	46%	.	.	58%
All learning aims	4,855	64%	70%	3,475	84%	78%

. denotes not applicable.

Source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Barry Norris HMI	Reporting Inspector
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Sharon James	Peer Inspector
Emil Evans	Peer Inspector
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