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Dear Mr Jones

## **Estyn Annual Review of Performance report on Coleg Cambria**

Following the Annual Review of Performance visit to your institution on 2 to 4 June 2014, this letter forms an annual report based on the outcomes of that visit. The letter is published on the Estyn website.

Gill Sims HMI and Liam Kealy HMI evaluated the current performance of the institution and reviewed the progress made against the recommendations arising from earlier inspections.

The inspectors held discussions with the principal and senior managers, tutors, learners and members of the governing body. They scrutinised documentation, including evidence on the progress made against each of the previous inspection recommendations. They also considered the quality of teaching and learning through learning walks and scrutiny of the provider's observation process.

At the end of the visit, Gill Sims and Liam Kealy HMI reported their findings to the principal of the institution, the chair of governors and other members of the senior leadership team.

## **Outcome of the link inspector visit**

### **1 Outcomes and standards**

Coleg Cambria was formed in August 2013 as a result of the merger between Deeside College and Yale College. Deeside College had previously merged with Welsh College of Horticulture in 2009 and with Llysfasi College in 2010. The following evaluation of outcomes is based on the merged data for Deeside College and Yale College.

Across all courses, Coleg Cambria was the top performing college in 2011-2012 with an overall success rate of 86%. This was four percentage points above the national comparator. In 2012-2013 the success rate fell by one percentage point to bring the college in line with the national comparator for that year. The college remains in the top quarter of all colleges in Wales for success rates on all courses.

Eighty-six per cent of the college enrolments in 2012-2013 were on long courses. The college success rate for long courses has stayed consistent at 84% over the last two years. However, the national comparator has increased and the college has moved from three percentage points above the national comparator in 2011-2012 to being in-line with national comparator in 2012-2013. Successful completion of long courses improved in around half of the subject sector areas.

Overall, 92% of long course enrolments result in the learners attaining their qualifications. This is just one percentage point below the national average for Wales. Hospitality and catering, engineering and manufacturing technologies, and science and mathematics remain very strong subject areas with nearly all enrolments resulting in a qualification and nearly all learners successfully completing their courses. Attainment rates are below the sector averages in a few courses, particularly in sport and performing arts.

Most learners on short courses successfully complete their learning. The overall success rate has remained consistent at 95% for both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 and the college has been in the top half of all colleges for the last two years.

## **2 Essential skills**

The college has carried out a thorough review of the processes for identifying learners' literacy and numeracy skills needs. All learners have an initial assessment of needs at the start of their course for this next academic year.

Learners benefit from a suitable range of skills support including out-of-class support with specialist teachers and in-class support, as required, throughout their course. However, following the merger, the college has yet to implement plans to align different patterns of support provision across all sites or to share best practice.

Literacy and numeracy skills development is a natural and integral part of many of the courses at the college and across many subject sector areas. However, a few courses and subject sector areas do not currently address learners' skills needs well enough through naturally occurring opportunities in their main course of study.

## **3 Teaching and assessment**

The college has arrangements in place to improve teaching and assessment. The college has appointed curriculum specialists to its deputy director posts. These staff bring subject expertise to the role, enabling them to support and challenge teaching staff to improve performance. Directors and deputy/assistant directors have taken part in training to improve their coaching and mentoring skills. This has improved their skills and enhanced their understanding of how to help staff to improve their teaching.

The college makes a significant investment in continuing professional development (CPD) for its teaching staff. It has created a directorate of teaching, learning and professional development that is responsible for delivering a programme of CPD for staff at all levels within the college. Staff are also able to access subject-specific training. Overall, the staff spoken to during the visit felt well supported by the college and considered that their teaching had improved in recent years as a result of the CPD activities in which they had taken part.

The college self-assessment and quality improvement processes identify courses and learning areas that are performing well and those that require improvement. As a result, curriculum managers (directors and deputy/assistant directors) identify and disseminate good practice and put plans in place to help teams to improve their teaching.

The college has agreed a new process for observing teaching and learning. It is currently training staff to undertake observations by refining their skills, understanding and behaviours in evaluating the quality of teaching.

Teaching staff increasingly use ICT and social media innovatively to undertake assessment and provide useful feedback to learners about how to improve their skills. This means that learners receive feedback about their work quickly. Students make good use of these facilities to present their work for assessment and to seek guidance on, and critical appraisal of, their progress.

#### **4 Curriculum**

The college makes appropriate use of labour market information to plan its curriculum. It is developing the curriculum on a regional basis, taking into account information about career opportunities across an extended area, including nearby areas in England. The curriculum planning system enables managers to align provision across campuses to ensure that all learners have equal access to curriculum pathways and courses. Curriculum planning also builds in progression opportunities for learners. As a result, the college is able to offer a wider curriculum. The merger of the two institutions has allowed learners to access more courses at a level that is right for them and to progress to higher levels of learning in their chosen subject areas.

Senior leaders encourage all staff to take responsibility for developing the curriculum. This empowers teaching staff to take a lead role in creating opportunities for learners and for developing networks and contacts in their sectors. As a result, staff are able to seek and establish work placements, create opportunities for learners to develop skills in practical ways, and organise extra-curricular activities such as taking part in skills competitions or enterprise activities. Staff also take responsibility for developing the curriculum using ICT and a range of social media. They use these resources very well to post curriculum materials and tasks, to create on-line resources and to set assignments.

The college has reviewed and aligned entry requirements for all courses; this has had a positive impact in ensuring that learners enrol on courses at the appropriate level.

The college involves employers well in the design and delivery of the curriculum. It works well with sector networks and professional associations to set up work placements, secure industry standard equipment and resources, bring in external trainers and speakers with relevant experience and help learners to make progress in their careers.

## **5 Leadership and management**

Governors and senior managers are working well to promote the mission and vision of the new college to all staff and to the community. They have achieved a strong public profile for the new college as a new, single entity within a very short timescale. They have consulted with an extensive range of stakeholders to inform the planning of a new college to meet the needs of learners, employers and the community. They are pro-active in making sure that the strategic direction of the college is understood in regional strategic forums. They are also working very well with local authorities and schools in the region to reorganise post-16 learning and to set up new economic partnerships.

The college has extended its senior management team to include directors with curriculum specialisms. This means that these directors can steer their curriculum areas with more confidence and promote the vision and mission of the college across all levels of the institution as well as providing strong leadership to teaching staff. They model the college's expected behaviours and standards well.

The governing body is thorough in scrutinising standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management. Governors work with the quality team to review learner outcomes across all subject sector areas, to provide reports to the governing body and to identify plans for improvement. Individual governors take responsibility for monitoring the work of specific sector subject areas.

## **6 Leadership and management (quality assurance)**

The college has set up a detailed process for self-assessment at subject sector area level, including data validation. This involves staff teams, managers and governors actively evaluating performance and agreeing actions for improvement. The quality team makes effective use of performance data to provide useful information to directors and course teams to identify courses that are performing well or that require improvement. As a result, course teams are better able to identify strengths and areas for improvement and to implement appropriate actions for improvement. Senior managers have a detailed understanding of the factors that impact on learners' success rates and have plans in place to secure improvements.

The college makes appropriate use of its quality improvement plan to identify actions for improvement and the plan clearly identifies the staff responsible for addressing each action. The senior management team monitors progress against these actions and reports the outcomes to the governing body.

The governing body also has a useful self-assessment procedure to improve its own performance. The chair holds governors to account for their contribution during the

year and carries out individual governor reviews. The governing body delegates responsibility to individual governors for undertaking specific roles.

The college involves learners in improving the quality of their learning experience. It has a formal structure of class/course representatives, campus representatives, and student leaders. Student leaders formally elect two student presidents who sit on the governing body. This structure is effective in enabling students to participate in governing body discussions and to influence decisions. The structure is also effective in canvassing the views of learners about the quality of teaching and learning. The quality team use feedback from learners well in the process of course reviews and in improvement planning. The college provides useful training to class and course representatives to make sure they have the necessary skills to carry out their roles effectively.

## **7 Summary on progress on the recommendations outlined in the report of Welsh College of Horticulture, Llysfasi College, Yale College and Deeside College**

The college has carried out a thorough analysis of the progress made towards implementing the recommendations from the inspections of Welsh College of Horticulture in 2005, Deeside College in 2007, Llysfasi College in 2009, and Yale College in 2010. The college has carried forward any relevant issues it has identified within the initial quality improvement plan for Coleg Cambria as part of the college's quality review procedures.

## **8 Other**

The college has extensive links with the 14-19 networks in all of the local authorities in the area. Learners who are 14-16 years old have access to a wide range of courses and course taster sessions including enrichment courses. There are clear progression routes for all courses that inform career planning and help to raise pupils' aspirations.

Intervention and support for the school-link learners have been a key factor in ensuring that pupils stay on their courses and achieve their outcomes. This support has resulted in a substantial improvement in the outcomes reported in the student perception of course survey.

Many of the 14-16 learners who follow collaborative courses continue into sixth form provision at their schools or transfer to courses at Coleg Cambria.

The college is jointly leading Flintshire County Council's 'school modernisation programme' with the authority and several local schools to reorganise sixth form learning in the area. Post-16 learners will have access to a learning hub to enhance their curriculum options and learning experiences. Plans for this are well advanced.

## **Learner voice**

The quality team make very good use of the learner voice survey to discuss strengths and areas for improvement with class and course representatives.

Four thousand, six hundred and eighty-four learners in Coleg Cambria completed the learner voice survey. Of these, 3,437 were full-time learners.

Thirty-three per cent of the full-time learners rate their college as very good overall. This is two percentage points above the sector average. Eighty-five per cent of full-time learners state that their course was better than, or equal to, what they expected and this is one percentage point above the sector average.

Overall, learners' responses against the four key themes are slightly below the sector averages. A minority of learners rate the college's performance against the key themes as very good and a further minority rate the performance as good. The responses show that teaching and training attracts the lowest score at three percentage points below the sector average.

Forty-seven percent of learners say that the college is 'very good' at ensuring they feel safe and a further 39% say this is 'good'. No learners have rated the college as poor or very poor in this measure.

The higher scores in the learner voice questionnaire come from learners in engineering and manufacturing, science and maths and social sciences. Education and training have the lowest scores, although this is a relatively small department at the college.

A majority of learners say that they were offered the opportunity to learn in Welsh or bilingually when they started their courses.

### **Welsh language**

The college recognises that the context in which it works presents challenges to delivering Welsh medium or bilingual provision across all of its sites. Welsh language learning is offered as part of full-time English medium programmes in line with the colleges Welsh language scheme. The scheme sets targets beginning in September 2014 for a 10% year-on-year increase in this type of provision. As part of the curriculum planning process, the college is developing a bilingual curriculum development plan for 2014 to 2017. Learners who have studied through the medium of Welsh pre-16 will have the opportunity to follow aspects of their college programme through the medium of Welsh. Currently about 2,000 learners undertake at least part of their course through the medium of Welsh.

### **Recommendations**

In order to bring about the necessary improvements in a timely manner, the institution should do the following.

- R1 Implement the Welsh medium and bilingual curriculum development plan
- R2 Make sure that all learners have access to the full range of support options at all sites

## **Next steps**

Gill Sims and Liam Kealy HMI will continue to monitor overall progress through their link role with the institution.

Yours sincerely

**Lin Howells**  
Assistant Director

