



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

**A report on**

**Bridgend College  
Cowbridge Road  
Bridgend  
CF31 3DF**

**Date of inspection: March 2016**

**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

Bridgend College is a further education college with a total of around 13,000 enrolments. It has approximately 2,600 full-time learners and employs around 600 staff. In terms of the numbers of full-time learners, this makes it one of the smaller (ninth of twelve) further education colleges in Wales.

The college operates across five campuses at Bridgend, Pencoed, Maesteg and Cardiff. The college has a wholly owned subsidiary private sector training company, The People Business Wales, and a commercial training arm, Engage Business Wales. It also operates a residential facility for learners with disabilities and severe learning difficulties, Weston House, based within the grounds of its Bridgend campus.

Around half the college's learners come from within the Bridgend County Borough, which stretches roughly 20km from west to east, taking in the Llynfi, Garw and Ogmore valleys. The total population of the county is estimated at about 134,000. The college is equidistant between the large population centres of Swansea and Cardiff. The college also draws learners from along the M4 corridor and south Wales.

The college serves a region with pockets of high social deprivation. Eleven of the 85 areas in Bridgend are in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales, while 13% of the county's population over 16 have reported a mental illness, a figure two percentage points higher than that of the Wales average. Economic inactivity rates are high and above the Welsh average.

The college offers a curriculum from pre-entry to graduate level. It does not offer full-time A level provision. The college has the largest franchised higher education provision in further education in Wales with approximately 1,000 higher education learners.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The college's current performance is excellent because:

- Many learners make very good progress from low starting points and achieve good standards
- Learners' behaviour and attendance at college is exceptional, and their positive attitudes contribute significantly to the progress that they make
- The curriculum is highly responsive to the needs of learners in its community, in particular those of vulnerable learners
- The college has established an exemplary ethos and culture, which is highly inclusive to all learners, particularly those with disabilities and additional learning needs
- Highly individualised and planned support for learning is available to all learners, enabling those with a diverse range of needs to access the curriculum effectively

### Prospects for improvement

The college's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- Inspiring leadership from the principal has had a very positive impact across all areas of the college
- Managers across the college share a high level of common understanding of what the college expects of them and how they contribute to the future work and success of the college
- The culture of the college supports staff to innovate and to take risks as well as contributing particularly well to the confidence amongst staff of their capability to meet future challenges
- The college has strong and effective partnerships, which bring visible and direct benefits to learners, such as extensive links with universities allowing learners from all pathways progression routes into higher education
- The college has improved success rates for learners in a period of financial pressures and recovered from a deficit to gain a sound financial position

## Recommendations

R1 Improve the rates at which learners successfully complete their qualifications

R2 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment

R3 Develop quality systems to ensure that they focus on improving teaching and learning

### **What happens next?**

#### **Excellent practice case study**

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

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

In 2013-2014 learners at Bridgend college successfully completed their qualifications at rates around or slightly above the national comparator. For substantial qualifications (those that are equal to or greater than 150 guided learning hours), the college is ranked in the upper quartile in comparison with other colleges in Wales. For substantial qualifications, about half its learning areas are ranked in the top and upper quartiles, with very few in the bottom quartile. For all courses, the college is also ranked in the upper quartile, with a majority of its learning areas in the top and upper quartiles.

Success rates show a rising upward trend over the three year period from 2011-2012 to 2013-2014. Over this period, the overall rate at which learners successfully complete their qualifications has risen from 77% to 85%. The upward trend is consistent across nearly all learning areas. The college's own unpublished data for 2014-2015 is robust and indicates a continued rise in the overall success rate, although the upward trend is not consistent across all learning areas.

The college records learners' GCSE grades when they begin their courses. When compared to these starting points, the college's own value added analysis indicates that learners in the majority of learning areas attain at least as good or slightly better grades in their main qualifications than expected. However, on a few courses, learners do not achieve the grades that are expected.

Learners from different ethnic groups, male and female learners, learners with disabilities and learners from the most deprived areas successfully achieve their qualifications in line with their national comparators. The success rates for these learners show an upward trend in line with the general rise in the success rates across the college.

Learners with additional learning needs, including those resident at Weston House, do well and make good progress onto relatively higher levels of courses at the college.

Most learners make good progress in their studies and develop their skills and knowledge well. They are attentive in class and have respectful relationships with staff. They work well individually and in groups. They interact well with their peers and, in vocational settings, with clients and customers. However, learners on a few courses do not develop their skills and knowledge at a fast enough rate and a few more able learners do not make the progress they are capable of.

Many learners make good use of opportunities to practise their knowledge and skills in realistic contexts. For example, ICT learners run a successful technical workshop, undertaking computer maintenance tasks for learners, staff and members of the

public. Performing arts learners demonstrate through live performances strong dance and technical ability, including the ability to perform complex choreography with accuracy and commitment.

Nearly all 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 and numeracy. However, only a minority of learners are fully aware of the short term targets they need to reach to address these weaknesses and improve their existing skills.

Many learners make sound progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, often from low starting points.

Most learners listen attentively and with interest to their teachers and peers. In their vocational classes, learners communicate well. In classes with a customer service focus, such as beauty therapy or catering, learners speak confidently with customers and explain technical terms well. On the whole, learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate, according to ability. However, a few learners continue to make basic errors in written work.

Many learners practise and develop their numeracy skills well through their vocational courses. For example, learners in engineering use new skills to calculate how to manufacture items to tolerance when using milling machines. Learners with lower starting points improve their everyday numeracy skills such as calculating change and understanding and calculating time using 12 hour and 24 hour clocks. However, learners in a few learning areas do not develop their numeracy skills through their vocational classes well enough.

On the whole, learners make satisfactory progress in developing their Welsh skills. About a quarter of full-time learners practise their Welsh skills effectively through Iaith ar Waith programmes, which develop their language skills for their vocational routes. In few areas, such as childcare, learners benefit from Welsh language courses which are helpful in improving their employability. A very few Welsh speaking learners choose to be assessed or to sit exams, such as GCSE mathematics, through the medium of Welsh.

### **Wellbeing: Excellent**

Most learners value their college greatly. They express very high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of college life. Learners' positive attitudes contribute significantly to the progress that they make during their time at the college.

Most learners feel safe and very well supported in the college. They have a thorough understanding of health and safety issues in their work and learning areas. The majority of learners have a beneficial understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Learners' behaviour in lessons and around the college is very good. The college's citizenship code successfully encourages learners to take responsibility for their own actions and learning. Many learners develop positive relationships with their

teachers, and they are considerate and respectful of their peers. They engage well in lessons, work well with each other, and demonstrate well-motivated attitudes to their work.

Attendance rates at the college are very high. This year's attendance is currently around 94%. This has a significant positive impact on learners' progress and achievement.

Learners contribute effectively to decision-making at the college. Learner academic representatives meet regularly with senior leaders. They discuss matters of concern to the learners and make valuable improvements to the college environment and support for learners. They provide informed feedback to their teachers and contribute constructively to the evaluation of teaching and learning.

Many learners participate enthusiastically in a wide range of relevant enrichment activities to develop their employability and entrepreneurial skills. They make a valued contribution to the community through voluntary and fundraising activities for local and national charities. In many cases, their imaginative ideas reflect productively their own knowledge and experience of deprivation. For example, a group of interactive media learners work successfully with a local charity shop to establish a clothes bank aimed at disadvantaged teenagers. A few learners represent their college at a high level in a variety of local and national competitions that develop their personal and vocational skills very effectively.

Overall, the outstanding progress that many learners make in developing their social skills and confidence during their time at the college is a significant strength of the college.

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

The college plans the curriculum very effectively and offers a range of courses across all learning areas, which enable learners to match their career choices and specialist subject needs. Learners have beneficial opportunities to access learning from entry level through to level 6. The college has worked well with the University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University to ensure that comprehensive pathways to move on to higher education are available in all learning areas, and to create new routes for learners who did not traditionally have progression opportunities. As a result, a high proportion of learners go on to study at higher levels. Clear progression routes across all pathways and the rates at which learners move on to higher education are a particularly strong feature of the college's provision.

Planning takes very good account of local labour market information, the needs of employers and trends in performance to inform curriculum change or developments. The college is highly responsive to its community and has adapted the curriculum to meet its needs, particularly those of vulnerable learners. An outstanding feature is the Studio 34 art facility in Maesteg which offers learners inspiring opportunities to develop a range of skills and to stay engaged with education and training.



The college has reduced the number of part time courses offered as a result of the reduction in funding allocation during 2014-2015 and established a subsidiary company to develop and deliver courses to businesses. This has enabled learners who previously studied part time to continue to access provision.

The college offers a broad range of provision to support learners' literacy and numeracy development including Essential Skills Wales qualifications, GCSE and units of credit from entry level to level 3. The college has developed a clear strategy to address learners' skills gaps. The college holds useful termly faculty support panels to discuss each learner's initial assessment results, their prior skills achievements, their support needs, and their progress throughout the year. Additional GCSE courses have been provided to meet Welsh Government priorities.

Learners access a wide range of enrichment activities, which add value to their experience through their main programmes, tutorials, and college wide activities, for example through taking part in entrepreneurship challenges.

The majority of learners have worthwhile opportunities to develop knowledge and values related to education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

The college has developed a valuable range of activities to improve learners' Welsh language skills and understanding of the Welsh dimension. A quarter of full-time learners take the 'Iaith ar Waith' qualification. The college has worked well with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to provide Welsh medium level 4 'Preparation for higher education' modules designed specifically for level 3 learners wishing to progress onto higher education.

### **Teaching: Good**

Most teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and, where relevant, use their industrial experience well to support learners. Many teachers plan lessons well and, as a result, learners make good progress. In both theory and practical lessons, teachers use a wide range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies and high quality resources that engage and challenge learners well.

In many lessons, teachers challenge learners well to develop their knowledge, understanding and practical competence to prepare them for future employment. However, in a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and teachers' expectations are not high enough. As a result, a few learners of all abilities do not make the progress of which they are capable.

A majority of teachers mark learners' written work regularly and provide them with useful written feedback. However, across the college, written feedback is too variable and a minority of teachers do not give learners precise enough comments about how they can improve their work.

In Essential Skills classes, teachers support learners well to improve their literacy and numeracy. The majority of these skills teachers set and monitor appropriate targets for learners based on their initial assessment. However, in a minority of cases, targets are not precise enough to allow learners to track and monitor their own progress, and are not consistently relevant to learners' main courses and qualifications.

Teachers use a range of detailed systems that track the progress of learners appropriately. The majority of teachers use a suitable range of questioning techniques to test learners' understanding and knowledge. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not use questions effectively enough to test learners' understanding or develop their knowledge.

Nearly all teachers develop effective working relationships with their learners. Learning support staff provide learners with valuable personal support.

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

The college has very clear expectations of learners' attendance and behaviour. An appropriate range of policies and comprehensive procedures to manage these expectations contribute effectively to learners' high levels of wellbeing and improving attainment.

The college has recently started working with the local authority to share information on vulnerable groups of learners, including those that have been identified as being at risk of becoming not engaged in education, employment or training. As a result, the college is well prepared to meet the needs of these learners.

The college makes outstanding provision for all learners that need support, particularly those with additional learning needs. The outcomes of comprehensive specialist assessments result in learners being provided with resources and support that is tailored to their specific need. Well-qualified and experienced support workers and learning services staff liaise effectively with personal tutors to identify issues that may be affecting learners and implement appropriate support plans. They ensure that learners make good progress and are included fully in the life of the college. Learners without an additional learning need develop their knowledge and understanding of the needs of others; they accept one another without prejudice. This is a particular strength of the college.

The college knows its learners exceptionally well. Wellbeing officers are very effective in providing valuable advice and guidance to both learners and staff. Tracking systems are comprehensive and focus very well on measuring the impact of interventions on learner engagement, progression and attainment. Staff work well and communicate effectively with one another.

The college has recently developed an e-learning tutorial system available for nearly all full-time learners to access. This provides a range of very useful information on personal study skills and information on health related issues. Personal teachers maintain an oversight on the progress that learners make in completing the tutorials. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this.

In response to the requirements of the Security & Counter Terrorism Act 2015, the college has ensured that all staff have received appropriate training. Its action plan is thorough and comprehensive. The college's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

## **Learning environment: Excellent**

The principal, supported by the senior management team, has established a very positive ethos and culture across the college that fosters and supports learning effectively. The college provides a very welcoming and highly inclusive environment where learners from all backgrounds feel safe and well supported. The college is particularly successful in identifying areas for further improvement relating to learner behaviours. For example, the 'pledge' strategy involves all staff supporting learners through a range of targeted activities. These activities prioritise improving key aspects such as attendance, punctuality and behaviour.

The college is highly effective in challenging discrimination and inequality through its very strong focus on respecting diversity. The college has developed a comprehensive strategy to promote equality, diversity and inclusivity that links well to a wide range of other policies and activities. The college has identified seven key areas with a linked 'equality champion' responsible for college-wide awareness raising and development. These include ethnicity, gender stereotyping and religion and belief. A notable example is the high levels of support given to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners.

The college is imaginative in the way it uses its estate to maximise its benefit to learners. It has focused well on updating and improving classrooms and workshops inside its existing buildings. As a result, accommodation across the college sites provides learners with well-equipped classrooms and practical work areas that stimulate learning. Learners' high quality wall art is displayed to good effect to celebrate success and create a positive ethos.

Most practical workshops contain a comprehensive range of teaching and learning resources. The college has several high quality facilities. These include the performing arts theatre, sports academy and the hair and beauty facility. In these areas, learners access up-to-date equipment and work in a realistic work environment that prepares them well for future employment.

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

The senior leadership team have responded highly effectively to the challenges of decreased funding and the need to improve the standard of education and training with creativity and systematic rigour. Their determination to meet these challenges has resulted in a much improved financial position for the college and with better outcomes for learners.

The principal and senior leaders have re-focused the vision and mission of the college imaginatively and energised staff particularly well through this process. The principal provides inspiring leadership that has had a significant impact on the transformation of the college. Senior leaders display both resilience and persistence in pursuit of improvement in the quality of provision and the outcomes for learners.

Staff in nearly all areas are highly supportive of the college and committed to its strategic plan for improvement. They have a strong commitment to the college's mission to 'be all that you can be' in carrying out their work. Staff morale is generally high and has improved throughout a period of significant change.

Internal communication is highly effective with extensive use of principal's briefings, meetings and social media to ensure that all stakeholders understand why senior leaders propose significant changes. These processes have been aided by raising the skills of managers through the use of a rigorous management training programme tailored closely to needs of the college during a period of significant challenge. As a result, managers across the college share a high level of common understanding of what the college expects of them and how they contribute to the future work and success of the college. The change in culture of the college supports staff to innovate and to take risks. As a result, staff are confident in their capability to meet future challenges.

The college has generally appropriate arrangements for managing and reviewing the performance of teachers and other staff. However, senior leaders have identified shortcomings in the current arrangements and have sound plans for improvement.

The college is highly responsive to local needs and national priorities.

The governing body provides a very high level of challenge to the managers of the college. Governors have an extensive range of skills and current knowledge of post-16 education and training. They use these skills particularly well to question the college's managers robustly about any planned strategic changes and often request further information in order to have confidence in endorsing proposed plans. Governors are particularly thorough in challenging all aspects of the quality of the provision and the financial position of the college.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The college carried out a thorough review of its quality systems and procedures following the appointment of the new principal in 2013. The findings of this review have led to a focus on quality improvement, with the emphasis on sharing of best practice, in order to bring about an improvement in learner outcomes. The quality improvement team have introduced a number of successful strategies and procedures that actively involve members of staff at all levels.

Curriculum area managers attend useful termly meetings chaired by a senior manager, where performance of all courses is discussed in detail. These meetings identify underperforming courses and result in effective actions to plan improvements.

All areas of the college are involved in self-assessment and the views of learners, employers and staff are gathered and used well in this process. The college's strategic plan and key performance indicators are clear, and self-assessment reports relate closely to these aims. All staff can readily access current and three-year performance data using the college's shared network drive, and many areas use this data well to identify and challenge underperformance and to share good practice.

Recently, the college has used managers from other colleges to assist with the validation of its self-assessment reports at faculty and college level. This has helped to improve the evaluative nature and robustness of these documents. On the whole, the college's self-assessment is accurate and evaluative and the college's judgements for many learning areas match those of the inspection team. However, a few learning areas' self-assessment reports do not demonstrate a sound enough understanding of the areas' strengths and areas for improvement.

The integration of the college's quality and other planning cycles is clear. Quality development plans are useful and realistic and are risk-rated against the strategic aims. Targets within these plans are specific, measurable and timely and focus on the key issues for improvement. A senior management group regularly monitors progress against the plans. Governors receive helpful updates on the progress towards completion of the actions identified in the college's self-assessment report, and in its annual operating plan.

The college uses a range of strategies effectively to gather the views of learners, including its successful student representative programme, and learners receive very prompt feedback on their compliments and concerns.

The college's performance management system includes a new teaching observation process. This process judges teaching against a number of key themes, allowing for easy identification of areas of best practice and underperformance. The college has started to use this process to share areas of best practice it identifies and to target support for improvement where required. However it is too early to judge the impact of this new system on improving teaching.

### **Partnership working: Excellent**

The college has strong and beneficial partnerships with a valuable range of local and regional business, agencies and universities. The college benefits from these partnerships extremely well to provide superb opportunities to its learners, for example, through sponsorship to refurbish the theatre, or to set up a state-of-the-art sport performance analysis facility.

The college has developed a comprehensive higher education curriculum that has enabled the majority of level 3 vocational learners to progress to higher education through highly effective partnerships with regional universities. For example, the college has recently developed an innovative foundation degree in service sector management with one of its university partners. This has ensured that learners who would not normally access higher education are able to undertake a programme at Bridgend. The strategic development of its higher education partnerships has enabled the college to become one of the largest providers of higher education in further education in Wales.

The principal has identified the importance of establishing partnerships in post-16 education with schools in Bridgend. In particular, the college is working in collaboration with one local school to develop a joint curriculum and provide shared opportunities for learners. Although it is too early to judge the full impact of this development, there are already some benefits for learners, such as the 'aspire programme', where female pupils attend the college to improve their confidence and raise their aspirations.

The principal takes an active role in the local service board steering group, which directs the work of a range of relevant sub-groups. This allows the college to respond quickly to local needs and priorities and provides additional opportunities for learners, for example through the establishment of a leadership development programme for young people in Bridgend.

The college shares information well with the local authority and other agencies, through an information sharing protocol. This enables the college and the authority to track the destination of learners at high risk of becoming not in education, employment or training after leaving school. The college makes effective use of this information to develop appropriate curriculum and support plans to cater for the needs of this group of learners. This innovative arrangement has contributed to a reduction in the number of this group of learners in Bridgend and their participation rates at college are high.

The college has recently established a wholly owned subsidiary company to develop and deliver courses to businesses and to develop to its full cost recovery commercial income. This has resulted in an increase in the range of training provided by the college, particularly to small and medium sized enterprises and to five large companies in Bridgend who are some of the college's key partners. Examples of this activity include the development of a bespoke electrical engineering professional training programme, which has required a significant investment in specialist equipment.

### **Resource management: Excellent**

The college manages resources well, paying very close attention to financial planning. Financial performance is reviewed four times a year by a board of governors that contains sound financial expertise.

Over the last three years, the college has moved from a significant financial deficit to an operating surplus during a period of reduced core funding. To achieve this improvement, the college has undertaken regular reviews of management structures, levels of support staff and teaching staff. It has improved efficiency by reducing costs, without compulsory redundancies. Over this period, the college has succeeded in improving learners' outcomes and staff morale.

The college has also made careful efficiency savings in its running costs. For example, it has reduced its marketing budget by two thirds and moved to a social media-based approach. This has improved learner recruitment.

The college has an ambitious estate plan, which it reviews twice a year. The plan takes good account of the college's strategic planning and the plans of key partners such as the local authority. The college makes highly effective use of its building stock and resources, which it markets to the community and employers, generating further income. It has transformed some of its existing older building stock into inspiring education environments, such as a theatre.

The college's reliance on Welsh Government funding is the second lowest among colleges in Wales, with only 65% of funds coming from this source. The college has shared its enterprise model with other colleges in Wales.

The college commits a substantial level of investment in training staff and has focussed its staff training on relevant areas for improvement, for example in training staff to improve their teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The budget for staff training has increased over the last four years, despite the cuts the college has experienced. The college has invested well in training leaders and managers, which has helped draw people together in a shared commitment to the college's strategic aims.

Overall, outcomes for learners are good and the college offers good value for money through its astute management of finances and resources.

## Learning Area reports

### Literacy

#### Learning area context

Literacy at the college is taught through learner support, Essential Skills Wales classes, Welsh Baccalaureate classes, GCSE classes and Adult Basic Education (ABE). During this inspection we did not inspect ABE as part of this learning area. Learners also develop their literacy skills through their vocational programmes of study.

The college uses a standard initial and diagnostic assessment tool to identify learners' skills needs. Outcomes of initial assessment for 2015-2016 show that 71% of learners are at level 1 or below on entry to the college.

#### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Ensure that learners have suitable guidance to prioritise and set meaningful literacy targets, and improve the consistency between learner self-selected targets and those from diagnostic assessments
- R2 Increase the level of challenge for more able learners so that they achieve their full potential
- R3 Improve the rigour of quality assurance in the tracking and monitoring of literacy targets

#### Main findings

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

##### Judgement: Good

The college success rate in Essential Skills Wales (ESW) communication shows a rising trend over the past three years. In 2012-2013 outcomes placed performance in the bottom quartile and well below the national comparator, improving to the lower quartile in 2013-2014 in comparison with levels in other colleges in Wales. Unpublished data for 2014-2015 shows a significant improvement of nine percentage points for success rates in communication from the previous year.

Nearly all learners complete appropriate initial and diagnostic assessments at the start of their course and use this information suitably to identify literacy targets for improvement. However, a majority of learners are not fully aware of their specific literacy targets or the progress they are making towards achieving them.

Many learners make sound progress in developing their literacy skills from low starting points. Most learners listen attentively and with interest to their teachers and peers. Most use subject specific vocabulary confidently and correctly in discussions



and in their learning areas. For example, in hair and beauty, learners conduct knowledgeable consultations with clients using technical vocabulary well to explain why dual treatments may be inappropriate. In catering, level 1 learners confidently give allergen advice when communicating with customers in the training restaurant. A few more able learners use their prior knowledge well to explain technical terms and concepts in business, for example when discussing liquid assets and profitability, or ethical business arrangements linked with fair trade. In a few lessons, a minority of learners give brief and undeveloped responses to questions or are reluctant to participate in discussion.

A majority of learners organise their notes well, drawing on previous knowledge or research to show a clear understanding of topics and key terms. In GCSE English sessions, many learners summarise key points well. They have a clear understanding of examination marking criteria to improve their written responses.

Many learners write for a broad range of purposes and audiences including reports, formal letters and discursive essays relating well to their main learning areas.

Generally, many learners proof-read a range of extended writing well to improve their accuracy and expression. Their spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate, according to ability. However, a few learners continue to make basic errors in written work.

Many learners have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good.

Many work well collaboratively to plan and organise their work. For example, in tutorial sessions, learners work well in groups and individually to plan how to improve their time management and organisation skills.

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

### **Judgement: Good**

The college offers a broad range of courses to support literacy skills development, including GCSE English, ESW communication and skill build programmes. There is a clear strategy and process for learners to complete programmes at a suitable level. Most learning areas use information on prior achievement and initial and diagnostic assessments well in planning effective literacy skills activities within schemes of work and lesson plans. However, in a few areas, plans are not adapted well enough to provide challenge for more able learners to develop higher level literacy skills.

Most teachers establish productive working relationships with learners and good learning environments. Many teachers support learners well and demonstrate effective classroom management.

In many lessons, teachers are good language models and encourage learners to use an extensive vocabulary in discussion and writing. Many plan effectively and use a range of strategies to ensure that literacy activities are relevant to the learning areas and engage learners' interests. A majority of teachers use questions effectively to build on learners' prior knowledge and extend oral responses successfully.

In GCSE English sessions, teachers use challenging and demanding materials well to develop thinking skills and accuracy in proof-reading tasks. In these lessons, teachers help learners to write more complex sentences, use sophisticated vocabulary and develop their extended writing.

Many teachers mark assignments in detail providing constructive comments to improve spelling, expression and grammar. They provide useful opportunities for learners to redraft their work. Many learners respond to teacher feedback well and, as a result, their work shows a greater clarity in expression and accuracy.

The college has recently introduced 'literacy skills journey' booklets. These are paper-based individual learning plans (ILPs) that learners use to record targets that they have identified themselves, and to track the skills they have learned in discrete skills lessons. In a few areas, this is an effective process to allow learners and teachers to track and monitor their literacy progress. Nearly all teachers use the college electronic ILPs to record literacy targets from online diagnostic assessments. However, these do not consistently match targets in the literacy booklets. Literacy targets in the booklets are not consistently relevant to the learners' main courses and qualifications.

The college has clear processes and an appropriate range of specialist resources to identify learners who require additional support. Staff have relevant qualifications to support learners and help them achieve successful outcomes. Skills coaches have suitable literacy teaching qualifications and provide flexible learning opportunities to support learners' skills development.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Good**

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive 'skills for success strategy'. They have a clear vision for improving skills within the college and this vision is well understood by all staff. Staff use the strategy effectively in planning and developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, outcomes in both literacy and numeracy have shown significant improvement over the last three years.

There is an effective structure for the management of skills across the college. All leaders and co-ordinators have clear roles and responsibilities and have a thorough understanding of the lines of accountability. Leaders for essential skills, GCSE and learner support work effectively together to provide a coherent approach to skills development. This team approach is a particular strength of the college and is based on a shared set of values and ethos for supporting individual learners.

Leaders show clear forward planning in their response to national priorities, for example through developing provision for learners to retake GCSE English and mathematics.

Annual internal skills reviews are an integral part of the regular and well-established processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning. These reviews are well structured around four themes, prioritising standards, provision, support and quality.

The skills self-assessment report is an accurate and honest evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. Recommendations from the internal skills review and the self-assessment report inform the quality development plan. This is well structured and reflects well the findings of the self-assessment report.

There are appropriate quality assurance procedures to monitor and track learner achievements and outcomes for skills. However, recent processes for managing the quality of learner skills targets, and recording progress of learners against their targets, lack rigour and consistency.

There are regular observations of teaching and learning. Outcomes from these observations are used well to inform staff development for skills, including useful training programmes and sharing good practice.

## Numeracy

### Learning area context

Numeracy at the college is taught through learner support, Essential Skills Wales classes, Welsh Baccalaureate classes, GCSE classes and ABE. During this inspection we did not inspect ABE as part of this learning area.

The college uses a standard initial and diagnostic assessment tool to identify learners' skills needs. Outcomes of initial assessment for 2015-2016 show that 92% of learners are at level 1 or below on entry to the college.

### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Ensure that learners have suitable guidance to prioritise and set meaningful numeracy targets and improve the consistency between learner self-selected targets and those from diagnostic assessments
- R2 Increase the level of challenge for more able learners so that they achieve their full potential
- R3 Improve the rigour of quality assurance in the tracking and monitoring of numeracy targets

### Main findings

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

#### Judgement: Good

The college success rate in Essential Skills Wales (ESW) application of number shows a significant rising trend over the last three years. The success rate for 2013-2014 is just slightly below the national comparator and the college is in the upper quartile in comparison with results of other colleges in Wales. Unpublished data for 2014-2015 shows the trends in success rates are continuing to improve.

Nearly all learners complete an appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment at the start of their course and use this information appropriately to identify numeracy targets for improvement. However, a majority of learners are not fully aware of their specific numeracy targets or the progress they are making towards achieving them.

Overall, most learners improve their numeracy skills well over time. Learners in essential skills classes make appropriate progress against lesson objectives. They practise existing skills and learn new skills in a range of different contexts. Learners in catering and hospitality develop useful skills in calculating proportion and improve their mental maths skills in busy kitchen environments. Learners in engineering use new skills to calculate the volume of cylindrical shapes. Many learners improve their understanding of numerical calculation well and become more fluent in everyday numeracy skills such as calculating change and understanding and calculating time using 12 hour and 24 hour clocks.

A few learners develop a secure understanding of more advanced mathematical concepts such as converting between currencies and comparing information from a range of sources. In land-based studies, learners develop a secure understanding of probability through a 'Bridgend Horse Race' where learners move their selected horse along a course according to the roll of two dice. Through this activity they discover that certain numbered horses have a better probability of winning the race.

Learners present their work for qualification portfolios neatly and accurately. However, across all learning areas, a few learners do not present their general numeracy work well. A few learners draw graphs, charts and diagrams that are not clear and precise enough and a few learners are not able to carry out simple numerical calculations independently.

Most learners enjoy their numeracy and mathematics lessons. They participate well and engage in their learning with interest and enthusiasm. However, in a few lessons, a few less able learners are frequently off task and do not fully engage in the learning.

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

### **Judgement: Good**

The college offers an appropriate range of mathematics and numeracy qualifications including ESW, GCSE and units of credit from entry level to level 3.

Most teachers have a positive, professional and supportive relationship with learners. They use a variety of teaching strategies and activities well to keep learners engaged. Nearly all teachers produce well-structured schemes of work and detailed session plans that support their teaching effectively. They plan numeracy skills around topics that are interesting and relevant to learners.

Around half of teachers plan activities to meet the different levels of learners in their classes, particularly lower ability learners. However, a few teachers do not consistently plan well enough to provide suitable challenge for more able learners.

A few teachers plan activities that are fun, and in these sessions learner engagement is high. For example, in travel and tourism, teachers use activities that encourage learners to engage in competitive games to develop money skills.

A few teachers in vocational skills lessons develop learners' skills as a naturally occurring part of their main course. In discrete classes, teachers relate learning to the context of their main qualification. Around half of teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to provide stimulating resources. However, in a few classes there is an over reliance on work sheets.

Most teachers use targeted questioning well to assess knowledge. Many teachers use probing questions effectively to develop thinking skills and to assess learners' understanding. They use ongoing assessment well throughout the lesson to check learners' progress.

Most teachers marking is up to date. However, a few teachers do not provide learners with sufficiently constructive comments to enable learners to progress.

Nearly all essential skills teachers check regularly that learners have targets on their numeracy learner journey booklets. These are paper based individual learning plans (ILPs) that learners use in skills lessons to record targets they have identified for themselves and to track the skills they have learned in lessons. A few teachers use the learner journey booklets very well to track and monitor these targets. Nearly all teachers use the college electronic ILPs to record learners' targets from their online diagnostic assessments. However, these do not consistently match targets in the learner journey booklets. Learner journey targets are not consistently relevant to the learners' main course and qualifications.

The college has effective strategies for helping learners who require additional support. Support staff use an appropriate range of resources and strategies to make sure that learners achieve successful outcomes. Skills coaches provide an effective useful range of flexible opportunities to support skills development.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Good**

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive 'skills for success strategy'. They have a clear vision for improving skills within the college and this vision is well understood by all staff. Staff use the strategy effectively in planning and developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, outcomes in both literacy and numeracy have shown significant improvement over the last three years.

There is an effective structure for the management of skills across the college. All leaders and co-ordinators have clear roles and responsibilities and have a thorough understanding of the lines of accountability. Leaders for essential skills, GCSE and learner support work effectively together to provide a coherent approach to skills development. This team approach is a particular strength of the college and is based on a shared set of values and ethos for supporting individual learners.

Leaders show clear forward planning in their response to national priorities, for example through developing provision for learners to retake GCSE English and mathematics.

Annual internal skills reviews are an integral part of the regular and well-established processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning. These reviews are well structured around four themes, prioritising standards, provision, support and quality.

The skills self-assessment report is an accurate and honest evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. Recommendations from the internal skills review and the self-assessment report inform the quality development plan. This is well structured and reflects well the findings of the self-assessment report.

There are appropriate quality assurance procedures to monitor and track learner achievements and outcomes for skills. However, recent processes for managing the quality of learner skills targets, and recording progress of learners against their targets, lack rigour and consistency.

There are regular observations of teaching and learning. Outcomes from these observations are used well to inform staff development for skills, including useful training programmes and sharing good practice.

## Art and Design

### **Learning area context**

The learning area of art, design and performing arts is part of the curriculum area for creative arts and information technology at the college. Learning is based on four campuses and courses start at level 1. Most courses offer progression routes to higher education courses within the college.

Around a half of all learners come from areas of deprivation. Well over a third of learners have additional learning needs. A minority have complex additional learning needs. This proportion is considerably higher than in any other department in the college, apart from Independent Learning Skills. For example, on one level 3 course, three quarters of learners have additional learning needs.

### **Learning area recommendations**

R1 Ensure that teaching stretches and challenges all learners

### **Main findings**

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

#### **Judgement: Excellent**

The learning area has a steadily improving trend in rates of attainment, completion and success over three years so that outcomes are now close to or better than the national comparator. Performing arts success rates for substantial courses are very

slightly below the national comparator , while art and design success rates are well above. Unpublished data provided by the college for 2014-2015 is robust and demonstrates that this upward trend is continuing. In music courses, from which historically too many learners have dropped out early, retention rates are currently improving well.

Most learners, including those with complex additional learning needs, make strong and rapid progress in their learning and continue to higher courses. There are many examples of learners who joined college to do level 1 or level 2 courses and progress to higher education. The outstanding progress made by many learners who start with very limited skills is an outstanding feature of learners' achievement.

Performing arts learners develop self-confidence and very good performance skills. They display strong dance and technical ability, including the ability to perform complex choreography with accuracy and commitment. They reflect on and evaluate their performance exceptionally well, developing clear insights into how they can improve. They have a good understanding of how they can use emotional memory to enhance the quality of their performances. They work together highly effectively as a large ensemble. They understand the professional standards required of the industry and work hard to meet these.

Music learners develop performance skills to a high level. A majority joining level 2 courses who have not yet developed expertise in playing instruments quickly gain an understanding of music theory and gain confidence and skills in instrumental playing.

Art and design learners produce work to a very high standard and display their work throughout the college. They use sketchbooks effectively, most of which become rich visual documents, containing evidence of extensive experimentation, annotation and carefully considered analysis.

Nearly all learners work well together and give each other mutual support to develop their skills further. They take great pride in their work and their achievements.

Many learners begin courses, having poor literacy and numeracy skills on entry. Nearly all make strong progress in developing these skills and gaining Essential Skills Wales qualifications. Nearly all are very clear why they need to develop these skills and that they help the learners to achieve their broader learning goals. They have a solid understanding of what they need to improve these skills further. Most learners develop secure digital literacy skills, for example through using computers to undertake design projects, to edit and assemble videos, to undertake internet research for assignments and to complete written work for their files.

Many learners take part in Urdd competitions and bilingual performances to develop their Welsh language skills. Performing arts learners have participated in a bilingual enterprise project, which included workshops and discussions with bilingual actors.

Performing arts learners take part in regular fitness sessions and assessments. They have a clear understanding of healthy eating and hydration. Learners have responded well to the introduction of healthier eating options in the canteen.

Nearly all learners attend well and behave well in classes. Nearly all are highly motivated and strive to improve their skills. They take responsibility for their own improvement, but take time to support other learners well. Many use these skills productively outside college to gain employment performing in public or to produce and exhibit art work. Most take part in college activities to support charities.

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

### **Judgement: Good**

Across the learning area, learners are able to follow a wide range of courses that match their career choices and subject specialist needs. Learners benefit from a wide range of external industrial partnerships which directly add value to learners' experience. For example, media industry professionals run workshops on producing, directing and cinematography.

The learning area identifies more able and talented learners well and they are offered additional opportunities to develop their strengths and skills with challenging extension tasks.

Initial diagnostic screening is used well to identify the skills needs of all learners. Teachers plan opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills well so that they occur naturally within tasks. Learning support is effective across the learning area.

Teachers plan well to include opportunities to increase learners' awareness of the language and culture of Wales throughout learning programmes, and to engage with education for sustainable development and global citizenship themes in their course work.

Most teachers plan sessions well taking good account of the different needs of their learners. Most teachers provide learners with suitable levels of challenge. However in a few cases teachers set work that is too easy and does not engage all learners sufficiently.

Nearly all teachers have up-to-date subject and technical knowledge and use this effectively. Many teachers use high quality learning resources and a wide range of teaching techniques to actively engage learners. Most teachers make good use of individual learning plans that are closely linked to assessment to set challenging targets for learners to improve.

Most teachers mark learners' work rigorously and provide useful, regular feedback to learners regarding progress on their courses. Teachers use information from assessment effectively to help set challenging targets for learners' individual learning plans. Teachers have high expectations of their learners.

The learning area has a well-designed induction programme that introduces learners to health and safety, departmental and college processes well. Tutorials are well structured and provide good support and guidance to learners. Learners with additional learning needs are supported well and have full access to all parts of the curriculum.



The learning area has effective systems to address any issues of bullying, discrimination or harassment. The learning area is very active in promoting understanding of equality and diversity for all learners.

Art, design and media students have well equipped studio spaces with specialist up to date equipment, as well as workshop and darkroom spaces. The theatre at the Cowbridge Road campus and the arts academy building in Cardiff offer outstanding facilities to support learning.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Excellent**

Leaders have established a clear and well-understood ethos of high performance within the learning area. All staff are clear about the expectations of the learning area and this has led to sustained strong outcomes for learners. The roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers are very clear and communication between managers and teaching staff is effective. There are clear lines of accountability and appropriate delegation of responsibilities. Leaders and managers provide effective direction and promote high standards consistently. They use data highly effectively to establish objectives and targets at all levels. Teaching staff understand and contribute well to the development of the strategic priorities of their areas. Staff morale and motivation within the learning area are very high.

Managers promote discussions about quality assurance issues well in departmental meetings and in one-to-one meetings with staff. Systems and procedures are effective in identifying and monitoring under performance and ensuring that there is continual improvement of learners' experience and outcomes. For example, there are regular business review meetings, which consider recruitment against targets, success rates and the audit of course self-assessments. This provides a robust process to identify underperforming courses, from which targets are then set to improve performance. Best practice from courses and individual teachers that perform well is identified and shared widely across the learning area. The learning area has a particular focus on developing innovative opportunities for collaboration between departments.

Leaders and managers take good account of learners' views when planning provision. There are systematic meetings with student representatives which, alongside information from learner surveys, feed into curriculum planning in a highly effective way. Course team meetings prioritise learner feedback, which leads to real improvements for learners, for example a review of assessment scheduling and the timetable structure.

The learning area has established a wide range of effective partnerships with employers, community groups and higher education institutions that contribute very well to improving standards achieved by learners and offer a valuable extension to curriculum opportunities. In particular, performing arts learners benefit from an extensive range of enrichment activities emerging from productive links with drama schools that provide visiting industry professionals. Many teachers have current professional experience and this enhances their teaching. They serve as aspirational

role models for learners. In media courses, learners have the opportunity to undertake work placements with TV companies or work on live commissions with professional clients, and several have been nominated for international youth film awards.

Staff gain financial support from local companies to develop provision. In Studio 34, for example, donations were secured to decorate and equip the centre. A particularly strong partnership with a large local employer has enabled the construction of a purpose built theatre, allowing learners to give public performances in a professional theatre environment.

## Leisure, Travel and Tourism

### Learning area context

The learning area of sport, leisure and tourism provides approximately 7% of Bridgend College provision. In 2014-2015, courses were delivered across two campuses at Pencoed and Bridgend.

The college delivers a range of full-time courses at level 2 and level 3. Currently the learning area provides courses in travel and tourism, sports coaching and development, and performance and excellence.

### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve the rates at which all learners successfully complete their qualifications
- R2 Do more to ensure that learners have opportunities to learn, practise and develop their Welsh skills
- R3 Make better use of learner profiles to plan teaching activities to stretch, challenge and support learners

### Main findings

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

#### Judgement: Good

In 2013-2014, the success rate for substantial courses in the learning area was close to the national averages. Over the last three years, the overall success rates for learners have slightly improved. The learning area places the college in the upper quartile of all colleges in Wales.

The college's own unpublished data for 2014-2015 for the level 3 extended diploma in sport and the diploma in travel and tourism shows that successful completion has improved significantly.

Many learners make strong progress towards their learning targets. They are engaged and motivated. Many learners set and agree short and long term targets

with their teacher. Nearly all learners know how much progress they have made and what they need to do to achieve their qualification.

All learners undertake initial and diagnostic assessments at the start of their course. The majority of learners set and work towards useful literacy and numeracy targets. Almost all learners improve their literacy and numeracy skills, for example, through the use of sporting technical terms or calculating the percentage of travellers going to different holiday destinations. Learners work together well to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and correct one another's mistakes. Most learners' written work is of a good standard.

Most learners develop a sound awareness of the culture and context of Wales. A few Welsh speaking learners use spoken Welsh as part of their studies, especially in travel and tourism. For example, learners use Welsh in role playing scenarios with simulated customers. Travel and tourism learners undertake *laith ar Waith* qualifications to improve their Welsh skills. However, in sport, learners make limited progress developing their Welsh language skills from their starting points.

Learners in the elite sport academy develop technical and tactical skills in rugby, football and multi-sports very well. Nearly all learners are involved in competitive sporting activities and learners from the college regularly compete in Welsh and British college championships.

Learners feel safe in the college environment and know how to report any bullying, harassment or wellbeing issues. Learners carrying out work placement activities receive a useful briefing on what to do if any health and safety issues arise.

Almost all learners enjoy college life and participate well in college activities. They are polite and courteous to visitors and show mutual respect for their peers and teachers. Learners undertake a variety of community projects, for example, through collecting sports kit and equipment, which is donated to a charity that distributes it to countries in need.

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

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area offers a suitable range of provision that meets the needs of learners, employers and the community well. Learners undertake valuable work experience opportunities that develop their vocational and employability skills effectively.

Literacy and numeracy development is planned coherently. Skills are effectively embedded in schemes of work and well developed through Essential Skills Wales sessions. The learning area uses initial diagnostic tests effectively to set targets and identify learners in need of support. These learners are well supported by skills coaches.

Most learners have beneficial opportunities to learn about Wales. In travel and tourism, Welsh language is promoted well. Welsh speaking learners are well

supported by the Welsh and bilingualism manager. Learners who are not fluent Welsh speakers develop their Welsh effectively through the Iaith ar Waith language qualification. However, in sport and leisure there are limited opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh language skills.

The learning area plans well for opportunities to develop knowledge and values related to education for sustainable development and global citizenship. For example, learners in sport and leisure helped to run a 'world rugby tournament' for local primary schools.

Nearly all teachers use up-to-date subject and technical knowledge well to promote learning. Nearly all have comprehensive schemes of work and detailed lesson plans with clear objectives. Most teachers plan effectively and use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies that stimulate and engage learners. Most teachers use learning resources well to engage learners and improve their learning. Nearly all teachers have high expectations of learners and establish good relationships that foster effective learning.

The majority of teachers provide stimulating activities at an appropriate level to meet the needs of all learners irrespective of their ability. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to support less able learners and challenge more able learners. Nearly all teachers have useful group profiles detailing individual learning needs in each class. However, a minority do not use them effectively when planning their teaching.

Most teachers use a wide range of techniques to assess learners' progress during taught sessions. However, in a minority of sessions, teachers do not use these techniques effectively enough to assess learners' progress.

Teachers mark learners' work well, with detailed constructive comments about how they can improve. Tutorials are purposeful and provide learners with opportunities to track their own progress in skills and on their course.

Teachers, skills coaches and wellbeing officers provide very good support for learners. Learning area staff identify learners with additional learning needs at an early stage and support them well. Induction programmes are comprehensive and prepare learners well for study and college life.

The learning area has an strong ethos of inclusivity, tolerance and respect. Equality and diversity are promoted well through tutorials and wellbeing officers.

In the learning area, resources and accommodation are well maintained and provide a stimulating environment that supports learning. Specialist accommodation, such as the sports hall, fitness suite, performance and media suite, are up-to-date and used effectively.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Good**

The two learning area managers provide clear direction to learning area staff and are keen to drive improvements in learners' outcomes. Managers and staff are clear about their responsibilities and their lines of accountability. The management team and learning area staff work well together and collaborate effectively with cross college departments, such as learner support services.

Across the learning area there is clear communication and staff morale is generally high. There is an effective schedule of meetings at all levels. Meetings have a useful standing agenda which has a focus on learners' attendance, success, behaviour and retention. Managers and staff use this information well to monitor key performance indicators. Areas of underperformance are addressed effectively.

Managers carry out an annual appraisal with staff. Managers use the appraisal system effectively to set teachers challenging targets that are starting to have a positive impact on learner success. Teachers benefit from a range of useful continual professional development activities.

Managers observe teaching sessions as part of the quality improvement cycle for teaching and learning. They are well supported by the college's teaching and learning manager. Managers use this information well to identify where good practice can be shared or where teachers need support.

The learning area's self-assessment report is an accurate, self-critical and comprehensive document that reflects the learning area well. The report provides an accurate assessment of the strength of the learning area and clearly identifies where improvements are needed. The quality development plan identifies areas for improvement well and sets timely targets. Learning area course teams contribute to the overall self-assessment through three yearly subject quality reviews, and these help to give ownership to staff to improve standards.

Managers attend network meetings with other colleges to share best practice and contribute to the development of new initiatives. Managers and staff are involved in various networks of professional practice, such as Sports Wales and Visit Wales. They use these networks well to make sure they respond effectively to the sector's needs.

The learning area has developed a wide range of effective partnerships with local, national and international partners. In particular, the college has a highly effective link with a large international company to support sport performance analysis at the Pencoed campus. The learning areas have valuable relationships with local schools and higher education Institutions. Resources such as the 3G artificial football pitch are shared well with the local community.

Managers are accountable for their own budget and manage their finances well. The learning area uses grant funding used well to support the provision of extracurricular activities.

## Information and Communication Technology

### Learning area context

The learning area of Information and Communication Technology sits within the curriculum area of Creative Arts & IT and within the department of IT and Creative Media. The courses offered within the area are:

- BTEC First Extended Certificate in ICT
- BTEC level 1 and level 2 First Certificate in ICT
- BTEC level 3 90 Credit Diploma in IT
- BTEC level 3 Extended Diploma in IT (Software Development)

In March 2016, there were approximately 95 full-time learners. There is no part-time provision within the area. All ICT provision is based on the Cowbridge Road campus.

### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve successful completion across all courses
- R2 Improve opportunities for learners to develop numeracy skills within all programmes
- R3 Ensure that teachers use a wide range of strategies to challenge learners to succeed to their highest level
- R4 Share best practice in the use of innovative technologies and assessment
- R5 Increase employer links in order to enhance the curriculum offer

### Main findings

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

#### Judgement: Good

In 2013-2014, success rates for all courses in the learning area were two percentage points above the national comparator. The college's own unpublished data for 2014-2015 indicates a slight dip in success rates. However, the department restructured its provision in 2014-2015 and this restructure does not allow for direct comparison of qualification aims.

All learners undertake literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessments. They are aware of their results and know what they need to do to improve these skills. They set and agree learning targets with their teachers and many learners use the college's electronic tracking system well to monitor their progress against these targets. Nearly all learners' portfolios contain work of a good standard that is appropriate to their level of learning. Learners develop their literacy skills well and benefit from the way in which teachers embed this learning into their sessions. However, learners do not have the same opportunity to practise and develop their numeracy skills.

Most learners at all levels use appropriate terminology. They take an active part in sessions, speak confidently and are able to articulate their thoughts well. Most learners develop their vocational skills well. Level 3 learners and a few level 2 learners use these skills to run a successful IT technical workshop, undertaking computer maintenance tasks for learners, staff and members of the public.

All learners take laith ar Waith qualifications to develop their bilingual skills for the workplace.

Learners make good progress in their studies and most progress to higher levels of education or into relevant employment.

Learners feel safe in college. Most learners attend regularly and punctually. Nearly all learners are engaged and motivated and support each other to succeed. They work well in pairs and groups and display respect for their peers and their teachers.

Learners from all levels participate in community programmes. For example, level 3 learners recently took part in a beach clean day as part of a national campaign. The learning area is represented well in the college's student ambassador programme.

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

### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area offers an appropriate curriculum. The area collaborates effectively with external organisations to arrange useful trips and projects for learners. Work placements are used well on the extended diploma in ICT to provide meaningful experiences for learners.

Teachers plan appropriately to develop learners' literacy skills and provide suitable literacy opportunities through their subject areas. Nearly all teachers apply the college's literacy marking guide well. However, only a few teachers develop opportunities to integrate numeracy skills through their subject areas.

There are beneficial opportunities for learners who are not fluent Welsh speakers to develop their Welsh effectively through the laith ar Waith language qualification. However, only a few teachers use naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' Welsh skills through their subject areas. Only a few teachers use opportunities to develop the themes of education for sustainable development and global citizenship well.

The majority of teachers set appropriate pace in their lessons. They plan a suitable range of teaching strategies and apply software for learning well. They set interactive and practical tasks effectively. A few make good use of innovative technologies and learning approaches.

Nearly all teachers employ basic questioning appropriately. However, only a few teachers use questioning effectively to probe learners' deeper knowledge and understanding. In a very few cases, teachers do not allow learners to develop their answers sufficiently.

Most teachers provide clear oral and written feedback to develop learners' understanding and to show what they need to do to improve. They set helpful short and long term targets, which are recorded on the learner's electronic individual learning plan and monitor these regularly. However, in a few cases, teachers do not stretch more able learners with sufficiently challenging activities or learning goals.

Nearly all teachers have comprehensive and beneficial group profiles and know their learners well. They generally use this information well to provide effective support to individual learners, including those with additional learning needs. Nearly all classes benefit from access to classroom assistants and the learning area is well supported by the college's wellbeing officers.

The learning area has effective systems and procedures to prevent discrimination and harassment. Nearly all classrooms are fit for purpose, with sufficient resources and good displays of learners' work. The learning area has invested in tablet computers and converted a classroom into a podcasting studio. Many learners, particularly those studying Welsh Baccalaureate qualifications, make good use of this studio to record evidence for their qualification.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Good**

The learning area has undergone many changes in the last five years. The curriculum area manager and section leader are both recent internal appointments who have a clear vision and direction for the learning area and have set challenging targets for improvement.

As a result of this, the college provides a revised curriculum offer, which reflects the current needs of learners and employers and takes account of local and national priorities. Staffing within the area has reduced significantly using a planned programme of voluntary redundancy. Leaders and managers have worked well to maintain staff morale, and staff have a strong commitment to the aims of the learning area and work very well together to fulfil the vision.

The learning area meets regularly with their link governor, who offers advice and guidance on curriculum provision and robustly challenges quality reviews. She attends awards and presentation evenings and meets with learners and staff to discuss their progress.

The college's quality cycle is used effectively within the learning area to review course performance, and regular team and area meetings ensure that all staff are aware of learner performance and what needs to improve. The learning area responded quickly to the negative views of learners in the 2015 Learner Voice survey and changes to the curriculum and staffing have resulted in a very positive outcome in the college's own recent learner survey.

The area has recognised the need for improved learner attendance and completion, and this year is working very effectively with the college's wellbeing and support department to follow up on non-attendance and learners at-risk of dropping out.



The learning area's self-assessment report is a helpful document and accurately identifies the area's strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the area has recognised that links with employers are limited and that it needs to work to improve these. There are signs of improved partnership working, which have had a positive impact on learners. For example a level 3 group visited a local electronics factory, leading to learners gaining work placements, and subsequently offers of employment.

Management of resources is effective. Changes in the staffing levels and curriculum offer have led to teachers working across all levels of the curriculum, and this they do very well, using their specialist knowledge to develop learners' skills appropriately.

Staff undertake regular continual professional development and many are members of professional bodies and take advantage of the update training offered by these organisations. However, teachers within the learning area do not take sufficient opportunity to share good practice with each other, particularly in relation the best practice in the use of innovative technologies and assessment.

## Independent Living Skills

### **Learning area context**

The learning area of independent living skills / pre-vocational studies provides courses from pre-entry to level 1 to meet the needs of learners with a wide range of learning needs. These include learners with physical and sensory disabilities, and autism.

Learners follow courses in personal progress, life skills and employability according to their ability. The department typically recruits around 50 full-time learners each year. This includes learners who reside in Weston House, the college's specialist residential provision for learners with learning difficulties, physical and sensory disabilities, and autism. The residential aspect of provision for learners residing in Weston House is not in scope in this inspection.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards of learners with national averages or to analyse the performance trends of groups over time because of the nature of the learners' needs.

### **Learning area recommendations**

- R1 Introduce systems that identify learners' skills and abilities and track their progress accurately in relation to individual starting points
- R2 Ensure that targets on learners' individual education plans address the skills learners will need in their future lives
- R3 Improve the quality of work-related education for all learners
- R4 Ensure that teachers' planning includes learning experiences that meet the needs and abilities of all learners within the group
- R5 Implement self-evaluation processes that focus sufficiently on learner outcomes

## **Main findings**

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

#### **Judgement: Adequate**

Nearly all learners make good progress in attaining an appropriate range of qualifications in personal progress, independent living skills and employability. On completing their course, most learners progress successfully onto other courses within the learning area. In 2014-2015, about a third of learners progressed onto higher-level courses and just over half of learners completed further qualifications at the same level. However, the college is unable to account for the destinations of just over 10% of leavers last year.

Overall, initial assessments of individual learners' abilities are neither comprehensive nor accurate. Targets on learners' individual education plans do not reflect sufficiently their needs and abilities. The college does not have effective systems for the recording and tracking of learners' progress in important skill areas. As a result, managers are unable to demonstrate or evaluate how much progress learners make in the development of their skills in relation to their previous attainment.

Most learners listen carefully to their teachers and respond appropriately to instructions and questions with little prompting. However, many less able learners demonstrate limited recall of their prior learning. The majority listen to each other well and discuss their work together in pairs and groups effectively. More able learners research and make presentations to their class and take part in group discussions, responding to questions and justifying their point of view successfully.

All learners practise and develop their reading skills in line with their ability. A minority of learners read with confidence and expression. A few read more difficult texts for gist and summarise key points effectively.

The majority of learners write clearly and take suitable care with the presentation of their work. Most learners practise their writing skills well. However, more able learners do not develop their extended writing skills as well as they could because of the too frequent use of worksheets.

Many learners develop and apply their numeracy skills in relation to life skills well, for example in telling the time and in recognising coins. More able learners conduct simple surveys and calculate percentages accurately. They estimate prices of food items and household goods correctly and complete simple calculations in relation to these successfully.

Most learners behave well in lessons and around the college. They are polite and courteous to adults and to their peers. They have positive attitudes to learning, engage well in lessons and focus effectively on their work. The attendance and behaviour of learners in the learning area are a strength.

Most learners feel safe within the college and know whom to go to if they have a problem. However, the college is not able to evidence learners' attitudes to healthy

living and their own wellbeing. Overall, very few learners participate in exercise or other activities designed to raise the standards of their health and fitness. A few learners act as course representatives and attend learner voice meetings each term. However, most learners within the learning area are not clear about the role of their course representative or about the impact of their work.

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

### **Judgement: Adequate**

The learning area provides a broadly relevant curriculum, which places appropriate emphasis on developing learners' life skills and their understanding of the world of work. It provides a suitable range of qualifications that allows many learners to make good progress onto other courses within the college.

Learners on the level 1 work skills course benefit from valuable external work experience placements that support their learning in college effectively. However, the majority of learners on pre-vocational courses do not have the opportunity to participate in meaningful work-related learning or to develop their vocational understanding in a realistic setting.

All teachers have positive professional relationships with learners based on mutual respect. They are effective role models and provide clear boundaries for learners. They have good subject knowledge and, overall, use this well to shape the learning experience.

Support staff know learners well and in many lessons provide an appropriate level of support to enable learners to make suitable progress in their learning. In a minority of lessons, they challenge learners effectively to develop further their understanding.

The majority of teachers use questioning well according to the abilities of learners. For example, they use open-ended questions to check and develop learners' understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers' use of questioning is limited to short, closed questions that do not encourage learners to extend their answers.

In many lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and too teacher directed. There is a lack of challenge in many activities. These do not develop independence, practical skills and understanding sufficiently. Only in a very few lessons do teachers provide suitable extension tasks for learners. As a result, learners do not progress as well as they might.

Most schemes of work are planned well and most lesson plans include a range of activities to engage and maintain the focus of learners. However, overall, planning is based too much on the requirements of qualifications and not enough focus is given to learners' individual needs and abilities.

In all lessons observed, staff provide on-going positive, verbal feedback. The marking of learners' work is generally up to date. However, there is considerable variation in the quality and impact of marking on improving learners' work. Many

teachers' comments do not provide clear enough advice on what learners need to do to improve their work. Opportunities for learners to be involved in assessing their own and others' learning are underdeveloped.

Staff in the department know learners' medical and behavioural needs well. They provide valuable support and guidance across a range of social and personal issues for all learners. However, the department does not have an adequate curriculum in relation to sexual health and drugs related education that meets the needs of all learners.

Transition arrangements with schools are effective and this contributes to learners' high levels of retention within the department.

The college has an inclusive ethos that ensures that all learners feel safe and have equal access to the curriculum. The learning area is well maintained and attractively decorated. Wall displays are up-to-date and celebrate learners' achievements effectively.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Unsatisfactory**

Over the past five years, there have been significant changes of management of the learning area. As a result, there is not a clear enough vision that is based soundly on the current and future needs of learners.

The roles and responsibilities of all members of staff are clear. There is an appropriate range of meetings. However, these meetings do not focus as well as they could on the progress of learners, current provision or other issues that are relevant to the department. Meetings do not always provide a summary of actions and these are not followed-up consistently. As a result, managers do not have a secure enough understanding of the department.

Performance management arrangements are in place for both teaching and support staff. However, the improvement objectives for teaching staff do not reflect sufficiently on observations of classroom practice and they do not identify their professional development needs.

The learning area has set out a broad range of improvement objectives and these focus suitably on improving the quality of current provision and learning experiences of learners. However, these improvement objectives do not align well enough with the three identified priorities in the quality development plan.

The learning area self-assessment report is weak. It does not use any first hand evidence on the quality of teaching or learning or other important aspects of the department's work. As a result, the self-assessment report does not demonstrate a sound enough understanding of the department's strengths and areas for improvement. It is unclear how the learning area's procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement reflect the needs of learners.

The learning area works with an appropriate range of partners. Links with local special schools are particularly effective in supporting the transition of learners into college. A small number of local business provide invaluable work experience placements for learners. These allow learners to develop new skills and provide learners with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Staff are deployed effectively. They are appropriately qualified and experienced in working with learners with special educational needs. However, professional development opportunities for staff to further their knowledge of the range of special educational needs are underdeveloped.

## Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies

### Learning area context

Engineering and manufacturing technologies courses represent approximately 8% of the college provision. Engineering courses are delivered on the main campus in the specialist engineering facilities.

The provision delivers a wide range of full time courses. They deliver part time courses for employed apprenticeship learners and school link pupils. In the current year, 2015-2016, there are 195 full-time learners attending courses.

Currently the provision delivers courses in: electronic engineering, mechanical engineering and motor vehicle engineering.

### Learning area recommendations

- R1 Improve the rates that learners achieve their qualifications
- R2 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment
- R3 Ensure that all teachers use the literacy and numeracy marking guide consistently to improve the quality of learners' work
- R4 Improve the pace and challenge of sessions
- R5 Ensure that monitoring and improvement planning procedures involve all staff and lead to improvements in standards

### Main findings

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

#### Judgement: Adequate

Over the last three years the learning area shows a steady trend of improvement in the overall success rates of learners. The college's own unpublished data for 2014-2015 is robust and shows that the success rate of learners has continued the trend of improvement. However, over this period the success rates in substantial courses are below the national comparator. This places the performance over the last three years in the lower half and bottom quartiles.

A majority of learners make appropriate progress in classes and a minority make strong progress. The majority of learners develop and demonstrate sound practical competence when undertaking a wide range of tasks. For example, they use milling machines well to manufacture items to tolerance and show competence when removing and refitting suspension systems in vehicles. In classes, many learners have secure theory knowledge relating to their engineering specialism.

All learners undertake an initial assessment for literacy and numeracy. Most learners are aware of their literacy and numeracy targets and can readily access them through the college's electronic individual learning plan.

The majority of learners' written work is appropriately presented and shows improvement in their literacy since they started their course. These learners generally present their work well using accurate and correct spelling and punctuation. The majority of learners develop their numeracy skills well. They show improved competence and accuracy in using engineering calculations.

Learners feel safe and well supported at the college. Nearly all demonstrate respect for each other and for their teachers. In workshops and practical areas, learners pay appropriate attention to health and safety. In classrooms, workshops and around the provision learners behave and work well with their teachers and peers.

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

### **Judgement: Adequate**

The learning area delivers an appropriate range of courses to meet the needs of learners and local industry.

The learning area has an appropriate literacy and numeracy marking scheme. However, teachers in the learning area do not use it consistently enough to help improve learners' skills. Most essential skills tutors provide beneficial support for learners in literacy and numeracy and are good language models. However, vocational teachers do not consistently give sufficient skills support.

A majority of teachers include Welsh language or the culture of Wales in their teaching at appropriate times. However, a few teachers do not take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to develop fully learners' understanding and knowledge of the language and culture of Wales.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Many teachers use an appropriate range of teaching strategies. The majority of practical workshop sessions are brisk, interesting and engaging to learners. The majority of theory sessions are well planned, engaging and challenging. However, the pace and challenge of lessons vary too much across the provision. In a minority of sessions, the pace of learning is too slow and teachers do not engage learners or provide sufficient challenge. In a few sessions, learners are passive for too long.

Most teachers give learners constructive oral feedback. A majority of teachers provide useful written feedback on learners' work. However, a minority do not give precise enough written feedback on what learners need to do to improve, or use appropriate directed questioning to check learners' understanding.

Resources within the learning area are appropriate and match learner needs well. Teachers make effective use of the college's electronic learner tracking system to record and challenge poor behaviour of learners and to provide progress reports to parents.

The learning area has a good range of practical workshops and theory classrooms. Facilities are well maintained and have appropriate resources to meet the needs of learners.

### **Key Question 3: How good is leadership?**

#### **Judgement: Adequate**

There is a clear structure for managing the engineering provision. The learning area management team have well defined lines of responsibility. Managers hold relevant weekly meetings to review core agenda items related to standards and wellbeing. However, the actions from meetings are not always specific enough and do not always focus enough on improving standards.

Managers in the area use the college's new teaching and learning observation process effectively to identify staff with teaching and learning development needs. Teachers from the area attend good practice sharing sessions, for example on the use of information learning technology and the college's electronic student tracking system with the effect that these systems are used consistently across the learning area.

The learning area's self-assessment report is evaluative and uses data from outcomes and staff and learner surveys well. However, in a number of areas content is overstated and does not clearly identify shortcomings. The self-assessment report identifies key actions, which are included in the quality development plan. However, the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching is not yet clear.

The learning area works appropriately with a wide range of employers who enhance the work-related education programme by delivering worthwhile talks and demonstrations. These include very large companies, small and medium size enterprises and micro-businesses. The provision works well with local primary and secondary schools to deliver taster days and school link programmes in engineering. However, work experience opportunities for learners are limited.

## Appendix 1

### **Learner satisfaction**

We use the outcomes of the Welsh Government Learner Voice survey to inform all our inspections of post 16 education and training. Learner Voice is a learner satisfaction survey conducted by the Welsh Government between January and February each year.

The survey asks learners a range of questions about the following key themes:

- the information, advice and support provided to them;
- provider responsiveness, learning environment and student wellbeing;
- the quality of teaching and training; and
- overall satisfaction.

Each theme contains a range of questions requiring learners to rate their provider's performance.



## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Steve Bell	Reporting Inspector
Gill Sims	Team Inspector
Sandra Barnard	Team Inspector
Alun Connick	Team Inspector
Vanessa Morgan	Team Inspector
Jackie Gapper	Team Inspector
Richard Mark Tither	Team Inspector
Mark Evans	Team Inspector
Huw Davies	Team Inspector
Eleanor Davies	Team Inspector
Linda Howells	Quality Assurance Inspector
James Nelson	Peer Inspector
Elaine Rees	Peer Inspector
Nigel John Hillman Holloway	Peer Inspector
Ashley Wallington	Peer Inspector
Duncan Hogg	Peer Inspector
Jacqueline Ann Button Kelshaw	Peer Inspector
Barry Roberts	Peer Inspector
Victoria Thomas	Peer Inspector
Theresa Jones	Peer Inspector
Stephen Cass	Peer Inspector
Richard Clayden	Peer Inspector
Rob Evans	Nominee