



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

A report on

Beechwood College

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

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

About Beechwood College

Beechwood College is an independent specialist college and care home, situated in Sully in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is owned by Beechwood Court Ltd, which is part of Ludlow Street Healthcare.

The college offers day and residential placements to learners aged 16 years of age and over who have learning disabilities and/or autism and who may have needs associated with autistic spectrum conditions.

The head of education leads a team of lecturers and learning support assistants and has responsibility for the provision and delivery of all education programmes. The college's strategic leadership team includes the director for education and care, head of education, deputy head of education, the care home manager and the clinical lead.

There are currently 59 learners on the roll of the college, of whom 44 are young men and 15 are young women. Of these, 21 learners are funded directly by Welsh Government, and 39 learners are funded by social services and health authorities from a wide range of local authorities across England and Wales.

The college's last core inspection was in April 2014.

Main findings

Strengths

The leadership team work together effectively and provide strong leadership. They have a secure understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development, and have made beneficial changes to extend the range and quality of learning experiences.

The education team work closely with the college's multi-disciplinary team to ensure there is a well co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to the assessment of learners' starting points and wider needs. They meet regularly to review learners' progress and plan suitable interventions to enable learners to access education and to help teaching staff support learners successfully in sessions. This integrated approach is an emerging strength of the college's provision.

Many lecturers plan lessons that are well matched to learners' goals and include a suitable range of activities to engage their interest. Staff know their learners well and adapt activities flexibly during sessions to respond appropriately to learners' reactions and levels of engagement.

In lessons, most learners participate enthusiastically. They build positive relationships with staff, respond constructively to feedback and sustain their focus successfully. As a result, they make secure progress towards their learning goals. In particular, they use information and communication technology well to research information, input data and record evidence of their achievements.

Areas for development

Staff use a wide range of suitable communication strategies with learners, such as picture exchange communication systems and computer programs. These approaches enable learners to communicate their choices and to access their learning more independently. However, staff use of signing is too limited.

In many lessons, learning support assistants and residential support workers make a valuable contribution to learners' progress. They help learners to develop their skills effectively and to manage their behavioural difficulties well. However, in a few lessons, learning support staff are not always deployed to best effect.

Although the college has introduced new systems for monitoring learners' progress during sessions, this does not extend to recording and analysing the attendance of learners who may be educated for temporary periods in the residential setting.

Recommendations

The school should:

R1. Improve the use of signing across the college

R2. Ensure that all staff supporting learning are deployed effectively

R3. Strengthen the recording and analysis of attendance

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous note of visit or inspection report

Recommendation 1: Ensure that learning experiences enable learners to practise and develop the skills identified in their individual learning plans

Since the previous monitoring visit, the college has taken suitable actions to enable learners to practise and develop the skills identified in their individual learning plans. For example, it has extended the range of learning experiences to enable a stronger focus on developing valuable independent, social and vocational skills. It has reviewed the format of session plans to ensure these identify clearly opportunities for learners to practise the skills contained in their individual plans. Lecturers meet weekly to explore consistent approaches to this planning and to share good practice.

The college has recently introduced an online assessment tool to record learners' small steps of progress against their targets. This provides learners, their parents and carers with an up-to-date record of their achievements, and helps learners to transfer and consolidate their skills in the home environment. Leaders have robust processes to track learners' progress against their individual targets, through regular meetings and through careful monitoring of the information the assessment tool provides.

Recommendation 2: Improve attendance and punctuality

The college has taken several suitable steps to improve learners' attendance and punctuality. Key actions include the introduction of an appraisal target for all staff, teaching and residential, to better support learners to achieve their own attendance targets.

Learners' progress towards achieving their attendance targets is monitored effectively through the college's daily multi-disciplinary team meetings. During these meetings, strategies for improvement and interventions such as timetable changes are discussed and then implemented promptly to encourage re-engagement, if needed.

Overall, learners have a strong awareness of their attendance targets, and their work towards achieving these is having a positive impact on their attitude to their work. However, it is too early to evaluate the sustained impact of the college's new arrangements to improve attendance and punctuality. Further, the college's current systems for recording and analysing attendance data does not take full account of the range of education provision that the college provides. For example, information about learners who are educated through the outreach provision the college provides in the residential setting is not routinely analysed.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

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