



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Michaelston Community College
Michaelston Road
Ely
Cardiff
CF5 4EX**

Date of inspection: November 2011

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 school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

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

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

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Michaelston Community College (deemed by regulations to be a school) is an 11-18 mixed community college serving the Ely area of Cardiff. Currently there are 727 pupils on roll, including 157 students in the sixth form. One hundred and nineteen of those students are over the age of 19.

The college is situated on the outskirts of Cardiff, to the west of the city, and serves a catchment area in which there are particularly high levels of social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 49.1%. This figure is second highest amongst secondary schools in Wales and significantly higher than the national average of 17.4%.

The college caters for the full ability range. However, the largest proportion of pupils is of average and lower ability with literacy levels below the national levels. Three point five per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is higher than the national average of 2.6%. A further 41% of pupils have special educational needs but no statement. This figure is also significantly higher than the national average of 17.6%. The predominant language of the pupils is English and 11% of the college's population consists of minority ethnic pupils. Six pupils are looked after by the local authority.

After Year 11, many pupils continue in full-time education which is slightly lower than local and national averages. A few pupils are not in education, employment or training.

Since April 2011, the college has been part of a federation with Glyn Derw High School. They share a governing body and an executive headteacher who took up his post in September 2011. The college currently has a temporary leadership team. In January 2012, the acting principal will take up a permanent role at the college and two new deputy headteachers will join the leadership team but work across both schools in the federation. The college has five temporary assistant headteachers, but this will be rationalised and three permanent assistant headteachers will be appointed to start in January 2012.

The individual school budget per pupil for Michaelston Community College in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £4,364 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the secondary schools in Cardiff is £5,183 and the minimum is £3,976. Michaelston Community College is tenth out of the twenty secondary schools in Cardiff in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

Good features were identified in the college's work. These include:

- very good care and support for all pupils;
- very few pupils leaving without a recognised qualification;
- the well-established partnership arrangement that effectively supports pupils, including the most vulnerable; and
- good quality teaching in the majority of classes.

However, current performance is judged as adequate overall because:

- at key stage 3 and key stage 4, over the last four years, performance in most indicators has been below the average for similar schools;
- in a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough;
- the provision for skills across the curriculum does not focus enough on developing pupils' numeracy and higher-order literacy skills; and
- too few pupils obtain qualifications in Welsh second language.

Prospects for improvement

The college's prospects for improvement are judged as adequate because:

- the executive headteacher, acting principal and temporary senior leadership team have a good understanding of the college's areas for improvement and have started to address them;
- the governing body carries out its role as a critical friend well;
- the majority of middle managers do their jobs well,
- self-evaluation processes are clearly understood and most middle managers understand the performance of their subject areas well; and
- the current college improvement plan focuses appropriately on raising standards.

However:

- success criteria for the actions in the improvement plan are not specific or measurable enough; and
- the college has not addressed important recommendations of the previous inspection report.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the staff and governors of Michaelston Community College need to:

- R1 raise standards at key stage 3 and key stage 4, ensuring greater consistency between the performance of subjects;
- R2 improve attendance;
- R3 strengthen provision to develop pupils' skills, particularly numeracy and higher-order literacy skills;
- R4 improve the quality of teaching, focussing particularly on challenging higher ability pupils within the group; and
- R5 improve standards in Welsh second language and ensure that all pupils are entered for a recognised qualification that matches their ability.

What happens next?

The college will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the college's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Over the last four years, performance at key stage 3 has been variable. In many of the key indicators, performance is slightly below that of similar schools. Attainment in a minority of non-core subjects has declined significantly in 2011 and does not compare favourably with that of similar schools.

Performance at key stage 4 in most indicators, particularly those that include English and mathematics, has declined over the last four years although, in 2011, performance in these indicators was close to the expected level. Since 2008, although English results have declined, performance has still compared very favourably with that of similar schools. Performance in mathematics was variable between 2007 and 2010 and data for 2011 shows a further small decline. Overall, pupils' progress from key stage 2 is generally as expected.

In the last few years, very few pupils have left without a recognised qualification and many stay in full-time education or training after Year 11. The percentage of pupils not in education, employment or training is higher than local and national averages but close to the averages for similar schools.

A minority of sixth form students follow level 3 courses and performance in this indicator is well below local and national averages.

At key stage 3 and key stage 4, boys do not perform as well as girls across a range of indicators. The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is close to that of other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as expected.

Pupils progress well in around half of lessons, developing their knowledge, understanding and skills, and the majority of pupils have good recall of information from previous lessons. They listen well to each other, their teachers and other adults, work well in small groups and pairs, and make effective use of their time. However, a few pupils do not listen well to others.

At key stage 3, pupils who have the greatest difficulty with reading make good progress following 'catch up' and other intervention programmes. On entry to the college a minority of the pupils do not have the reading skills that enable them to access the curriculum effectively. However, by the end of key stage 3, only a few do not have these skills.

A majority of pupils across the college make appropriate and effective use of subject terminology, particularly during oral tasks in lessons. However, only a minority of pupils make extended oral contributions. Few pupils produce extended pieces of writing or re-draft their work following comments from teachers. The majority of pupils are confident researching new information from a range of sources, particularly the internet, although a few do not interpret this information accurately and do not always understand what they have read. Although many pupils take care with the presentation of their work, too many pupils have incomplete or missing work in their books.

The numeracy skills of the majority of pupils are underdeveloped across the curriculum.

In Welsh second language at key stage 3, results have declined over the last three years and are significantly below the family average. At key stage 4, although nearly all pupils follow the GCSE short course, a significant minority are not entered for a formal qualification that matches their ability, and achievement is unsatisfactory.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Most pupils feel safe in college and have positive attitudes to healthy living. Many pupils consider that the college deals well with bullying and they know whom to turn to if they have a problem. The majority of pupils participate in sporting and extra-curricular activities.

Around the college, nearly all pupils are courteous and respectful to their peers, staff and visitors. In lessons, many pupils are well motivated, show positive attitudes to learning, make productive use of their time and behave well, although a very few pupils show challenging behaviour. Most pupils are punctual to lessons and registration periods.

Over the last five years, attendance has fluctuated and, during the last three years, has declined. Currently, pupils' attendance is in the bottom 25% when compared to that of similar schools. Pupils' low attendance impacts significantly on their progress.

The college council is an enthusiastic, well-attended and effective forum. While pupils attend governors' meetings, they have not been formally nominated. The college council has reviewed teaching and learning policies and is involved in staff appointments, including the recent appointment of the executive headteacher.

Many pupils are actively involved in community projects. Sixth form students plan a major community event each year to support Children in Need and over the last five years have raised around £60,000.

Older pupils benefit from taking on additional responsibilities within the college and participate in schemes such as peer mentoring. Pupils also act as 'lead-learners' to support their peers in lessons. Many pupils acquire the necessary skills for life and work outside college.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

The college offers a broad curriculum, which appropriately meets the needs of most pupils. This includes the '7Mile' curriculum. This integrated curriculum effectively supports the transition of pupils from their partner primary schools into Year 7. The 14-19 curriculum offers a range of academic and vocational courses, which have a positive impact on the number of pupils attaining the level 1 threshold. There are many opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning experiences through a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The college has made satisfactory progress in promoting skills. Departments identify the relevant skills within their schemes of work and highlight them in their teaching. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy and higher order literacy skills across the curriculum.

The college has an appropriate programme to promote the Welsh dimension. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of Welsh culture, including the annual eisteddfod for key stage 3 pupils. However, there is not a well enough planned and coherent programme for the delivery of Welsh second language at key stage 4.

Provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship is developing appropriately and is mapped across the curriculum. The college has an eco-group that meets regularly and pupils are aware of the need to act sustainably. Across the college, staff and a few pupils have developed links with other schools through the connecting classroom project, and visits have taken place to Ireland and Poland.

Teaching: Adequate

Nearly all teachers have good subject knowledge. Many plan their lessons well, set clear learning objectives and use a range of resources, including information and communication technology, effectively to engage pupils. Most teachers manage behaviour successfully and relationships are very good.

The majority of lessons progress at a good pace and consist of an appropriate sequence of activities. However, in a minority of lessons, there is over-direction by the teacher and pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop a secure and deep understanding of their work. In a minority of lessons, teachers ask thoughtful and probing questions that challenge pupils to think and provide more extended responses, although this practice is not consistent across and within departments.

The majority of teachers match work appropriately to pupils' abilities. However, a minority of teachers do not adapt the work well enough to meet the different needs of pupils, particularly higher ability pupils within the group. Consequently, pupils do not make enough progress, particularly in developing their literacy and thinking skills.

A majority of teachers give helpful written and oral feedback to pupils in workbooks and during lessons so that they have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. However, a minority of teachers do not offer constructive written comments in pupil workbooks. In a few departments, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and, on occasion, the work of their peers. This practice contributes effectively towards developing pupils' own independent learning skills but it is not widespread across all departments.

The college has a comprehensive system for tracking and reporting on pupils' achievements and progress. Detailed information can be accessed by departments to set challenging targets. Parents are well informed about progress through pupil planners, academic progress days and annual reports.

Care, support and guidance: Good

All staff provide pupils with valuable support and guidance. The effective organisation and use of wide-ranging college and external support services has contributed to a reduction in the number of pupils who leave the college without a recognised qualification as well as an improvement in the level 1 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G) at key stage 4.

Pupils' wellbeing and social development are promoted successfully as part of the detailed personal and social education programme. During lessons, and in extra-curricular activities, pupils gain extensive knowledge about healthy living and keeping safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is effectively promoted across the curriculum, as well as through topical themes in assemblies and the college's well-structured 'thought for the week' programme.

The college provides all pupils with wide-ranging specialist advice and makes effective use of specialist external services. The college's 'keeping you in school' programme provides valuable support for vulnerable pupils. As a result of specialists working together, pupils who find it difficult to access or remain in education make significant progress. Many of these pupils successfully stay in education and are re-integrated to college life rather than being permanently excluded.

The support for students with additional learning needs is very effective. Identification and monitoring systems are robust and progress is reviewed at least twice a year. The inclusion department offers a wide range of support programmes depending on the level of pupil needs, including in-class support, mentoring and withdrawal groups.

The college has made an appropriate start in identifying and supporting more able and talented pupils. However, this work is at an early stage and has not yet had an impact on pupils' standards.

The college has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The college is an inclusive community where diversity is valued and respected. Racial and social equality issues are explored sensitively and discussed extensively in lessons, form time and assemblies. The college actively promotes equal opportunities and pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision. The college integrates students with additional learning needs into mainstream classes appropriately.

The accommodation is sufficient to meet the needs of the learners. Resources for learning are good overall with sufficient information and communication technology resources. The activity centre, dance studio, style salon and open learning centre are attractive and welcoming facilities that significantly enhance the college's learning environment. There are bright and well-constructed displays in many classrooms, and buildings are in an appropriate state of repair.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Good

The executive headteacher, acting principal and senior leadership team have a clear and coherent vision for the future. They know the college very well and have a detailed understanding of the areas that need improvement. They are very visible around the college and have a very positive influence on behaviour and ethos. Despite the fact that the temporary assistant headteachers continue to carry out their original middle management roles, they carry out their college leadership responsibilities effectively.

Communication between senior leaders and staff is effectively maintained through a well-established programme of meetings. Senior leaders regularly meet middle managers formally, with appropriate agendas. A sensible annual programme ensures timely completion of self-evaluation, development plans, performance management and lesson observations.

Staff have clear job descriptions and work well together. The majority of middle managers do their jobs well. However, a minority of heads of department have not succeeded well enough in raising standards.

Senior leaders have taken several appropriate measures to raise standards in a number of areas. They use data effectively to highlight areas of strength and weakness, both in departments and in the performance of individual pupils. Underperformance is challenged rigorously and the college introduced new initiatives to raise performance.

The governing body provides thorough guidance and valuable support to the college. Committees on key aspects meet regularly and governors are well informed about the college's performance. Visits to departments by link governors result in written notes, and a group of governors scrutinises the college self-evaluation report and improvement plan and makes constructive suggestions. The governing body carries out its role as a critical friend well and asks challenging questions about performance.

The college pays due attention to national priorities. There has been a strong focus on literacy intervention strategies but not enough on improving pupils' higher-order literacy skills. There has been little focus on numeracy, but the college has now begun to address this. The college works hard to address social disadvantage.

Improving quality: Adequate

The college's self-evaluation report is thorough and detailed, and takes full account of a wide range of performance data. The college has a well-defined programme for self-evaluation and improvement planning at college and department level. The calendar of observations provides appropriate first-hand evidence about the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders analyse performance data thoroughly and most middle managers understand the performance of their subject areas well. Middle leaders produce detailed, well-structured self-evaluation reports that contribute appropriately to the college's self-evaluation.

The college regularly collects the views of parents and findings are reported in the college's termly newsletter. Pupils are also encouraged to share their views on a range of topics through questionnaires and during college and year council meetings.

The college's short term improvement plan appropriately addresses areas for improvement. However, it does not always include clear and measurable success criteria. The emerging college improvement plan for implementation in January 2012 identifies appropriate priorities and this document provides a stronger link between these priorities and the main shortcomings identified in the college's self-evaluation report. There is an appropriate link between departmental improvement plans and the main priorities in the college plan.

All teachers are involved in working groups, within the college, that focus appropriately on a range of issues. In addition, the college is developing worthwhile links with other schools in the family. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work. Staff have access to a range of professional development activities and these are linked appropriately to performance management targets. The college's peer observation programme is valued by staff and enables them to informally share good practice.

The college has not made enough progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report. In particular, standards in mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum have not improved enough.

Partnership working: Good

The college works effectively with a wide range of partners, particularly in improving pupils' wellbeing and addressing social disadvantage. The college has established particularly strong relationships with parents and the level of attendance at parents' evenings is very high.

Strong links exist with partner primary schools at several levels. A range of activities helps to ensure that Year 6 pupils are happy to move to the college and that they settle quickly into Year 7.

Students from a higher education institution offer mentoring support to pupils studying hospitality and tourism. This helps to raise their aspirations as well as offering support with their studies. Older pupils also attend BTEC Level 2 and Level 3 courses at Cardiff City Football club, with a high pass rate.

Links with the local community are strong. Pupils from the college develop their social and personal skills by helping others in a variety of ways, such as teaching computer skills to senior citizens in the open learning centre, or helping with a local garden show, 'Ely in Bloom', which is held annually at the college.

With the exception of the governing body and executive headteacher, the college is at an early stage of developing formal links with Glyn Derw High School.

Resource management: Adequate

The college deploys staff effectively and is appropriately staffed to teach the curriculum. The relatively small number of support staff are well managed to support the needs of pupils.

The executive headteacher, acting principal and bursar work closely with local authority officers to monitor the deficit budget. There is an appropriate plan in place to reduce spending. However, the deficit budget has increased slightly this year as additional staff have been appointed across the federation. Governors have the relevant information to enable them to contribute to financial decisions and have a clear understanding of their role in monitoring the college's financial situation.

The college manages its resources appropriately, although standards of achievement mean that the college is judged as providing adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

At key stage 3 over the last four years, the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) has remained fairly static and slightly below the family average. When compared with similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the college was in the bottom 25% of similar schools for the first time this year. In English, performance has been variable. In 2011, performance in English was slightly below the family average, placing the school in the bottom 25% of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Performance in English at level 6 and above has shown a trend of improvement and has been well above the family average for the last four years. Performance in mathematics has improved steadily over the last four years. It is above the family average and in the top 50% of that for similar schools in terms of free school meal benchmarks. At level 6 or above, mathematics performance improved in 2011 following a decline the previous year. Performance in science declined in 2011, and is now below the family average. Performance has been in the bottom 25% of that for similar schools in terms of free school meal benchmarks for the last two years. At level 6 or above, performance in science declined in 2011 and is well below the family average. Performance in many non-core subjects has declined significantly in 2011. Generally, pupils' progress from the previous key stage for 2011 meets expectations, although pupils' progress in science is unsatisfactory.

In key stage 4, achievement of the level 2 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C) including English or Welsh and mathematics has declined since 2008. Performance is now in the lowest quarter of that for similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, and below the family average although close to the line of expected performance. Performance in the core subject indicator has declined nine percentage points since 2008. This now places the college in the bottom 25% of similar schools in terms of free school meal benchmarks, and performance is below the family average. The college's performance in the level 2 threshold has also declined over the last four years. Performance is now below the family average and has been the lower 50% of that for similar schools in terms of free school meals benchmarks for the last three years. Performance in the level 1 threshold has increased steadily since 2007. The college's performance is above the family average and, this year, for the first time, the college was in the upper 50% of similar schools in terms of free school meal benchmarks. Since 2009, performance in the capped points score (comprising the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the age of 16) has been above the family average, although in the bottom 50% of that for similar schools in terms of free school meal benchmarks.

English results have declined since 2007, although this year performance was the highest in the family, and for the last three years results have been in the upper 50% of those for similar schools in terms of free school meal benchmarks. Since 2007, performance in mathematics has remained fairly static and during this period has been below the family average and in the bottom 25% of that for similar schools.

Performance in science has declined since 2007 and is also below the family average and in the bottom 25% of that for similar schools.

In key stage 4, pupils' progress is satisfactory in most key indicators.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 160 pupils selected at random from across the age range.

Many pupils indicate that they feel safe in college and that there is someone to talk to if they are worried. The majority of pupils feel that the college deals well with any bullying. The proportion believing that the college deals well with bullying is lower than the proportion saying this in other secondary schools. Many say that the college teaches them how to keep healthy and that there are plenty of opportunities for them to get regular exercise. Most pupils believe that they are doing well in college. Many pupils report that teachers help them to learn and make progress and most say that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to take on responsibility. Many feel that they have enough books and equipment to do their work and that homework helps them to understand and improve their work.

Many pupils say that the college helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds and that staff respect them and their background and treat all pupils fairly and with respect. However, around half do not think that pupils behave well and that they can get their work done, and they do not believe that the college listens to their views and makes the changes they suggest. Most pupils report that the college helps them to be ready for college or their working life. Many pupils in key stage 4 and post-16 feel that they were given good advice for choosing courses.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Eighty-nine parent questionnaires were completed and, overall, parents expressed generally positive views about the college.

Many parents are satisfied with the college and say that their child likes college. Most parents say that their child is making good progress and was helped to settle in when they started college. Most consider that their child is safe in college. Most think that the college is well run and that teaching is good, and nearly all that staff expect their child to work hard and do his or her best.

Most feel that their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise and to become more mature and take on responsibility. Many consider that there is a good range of activities. Most agree that the college's homework builds well on college work and many think that pupils behave well in college and that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Most think that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs and many consider that their child is prepared well for the next stage of learning or employment. Many parents feel that the college keeps them well informed about their child's progress. Most are comfortable about approaching the college with questions, suggestions or a problem and they understand the college's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Catherine Evans	Reporting Inspector
Steffan James	Team Inspector
Ray Owen	Team Inspector
Sue Morgan	Team Inspector
Catherine Jenkins	Lay Inspector
Alwyn Thomas	Peer Inspector
Jan Heery	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11