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# Pengwern College



ADULT LEARNING  
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Estyn  
Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg  
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
For Education and Training in Wales

## Inspection report

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## Contents

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Basic information about the college	3
Background of the organisation	4
Scope of the inspection	4
<hr/>	
Summary of grades awarded	5
Curriculum areas	5
<hr/>	
Overall judgement	6
Main findings	9
Curriculum area inspections	14

## Background of the organisation

1. Pengwern is an independent specialist college for students with learning disabilities, situated in Denbighshire, North Wales. The main campus is set in 23 acres of grounds that include residential accommodation and a farm. Six additional residential units are located in the local community. Pengwern is one of three further education colleges that together form the MENCAP National College. Pengwern college has a board of governors consisting of individuals drawn from the trustees of MENCAP and other co-opted members. The college's mission is 'to prepare students for the next stage of their lives'. There has been significant change in the leadership of the college in recent years. A new principal took up post in 2005.
2. There are 60 residential students, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) and local authorities. Students are aged between 16 and 25. A small number are from a minority ethnic background. The students have a range of learning difficulties and disabilities ranging from moderate to severe. The college offers programmes from pre-entry to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2. The curriculum is organised into the following main strands: skills for life, independent living skills, vocational/work experience and the extended curriculum. The NVQ programmes and some other aspects of the curriculum are delivered in partnership with four local further education colleges.
3. The college employs 99 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 20 are teaching staff. There are also learning support assistants, a speech and language therapist, a part-time occupational therapist and other specialist staff. Among the other staff there is a finance manager, an information technology co-ordinator, administrative and estates staff.

## Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); reports from the inspectorate annual assessment visits and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
  - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
  - achievements and standards
  - quality of provision
  - leadership and management
  - vocational and pre-vocational provision.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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<b>Achievements and standards</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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*Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.*

## Curriculum areas

<b>Pre-vocational Skills</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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<b>Vocational Skills</b>	<b>Satisfactory: grade 3</b>
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

5. Learners' achievements are satisfactory. Learners are successfully developing independent living skills. They are gaining in confidence and learning how to work together in teams and to manage their behaviour. Until recently, the college offered little opportunity for learners to gain qualifications that will help them progress to their next stage of education or training. This has improved but some learners are still leaving college without appropriate qualifications. They are developing good awareness of healthy lifestyles. They are able to make choices and to contribute well to the running of the college and to the wider community. Some learners are developing work related skills.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The better lessons have plans for each individual learner, support is used effectively and specialists advise on the most effective learning resources. Practical activities and work placements are helping learners to gain skills in realistic environments. However, some lessons are less effective and aspects of the curriculum are too inflexible. Some learners do not cope well with lessons which last a whole morning or an afternoon. There is a lack of clear progression routes within the curriculum. Systems to assess and record progress are improving but do not yet capture all the learners' achievements effectively.
7. The college response to social and educational inclusion is satisfactory. Learners are encouraged to advocate for themselves; they feel respected and valued. The college makes good use of the local community to enable students to develop and practise personal and social skills and gain new interests. Provision for basic skills is satisfactory. Learners who speak Welsh are encouraged to use their language and there is good attention to the Welsh dimension in the curriculum. Staff and governors have had recent training in equality and diversity but this has yet to impact sufficiently on the curriculum. The response to the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 is adequate. The college does not yet fully meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
8. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and support. Pastoral and welfare support is strong. There are satisfactory arrangements for the protection of learners. Good links with the careers service support transition arrangements, although this aspect of the college work is not well monitored. Since the last inspection, the college has made good progress in providing a range of specialist expertise to learners. There is no formal programme for personal, health and social education and learners do not have sufficient access to youth service information.
9. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new principal is providing dynamic leadership which focuses well on the learner experience. There is a clear vision for the college, backed up by detailed strategic planning. Staff are

clear about the priorities. Staff development is good. Systems for quality assurance are satisfactory and the college has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Governors are well informed and fulfil their duties satisfactorily.

### **Capacity to improve**

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

10. The college has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Leadership of the college is good. Management is satisfactory overall but the team is still developing. The college has increased the level of staff skills and specialist expertise. The lesson observation process is thorough and has improved the quality of teaching and learning. However, action planning arising from observations needs further development. The quality improvement review cycle is satisfactory but it is overly complex and there is scope for a more streamlined approach. The self-assessment process involves staff and governors and the report is broadly accurate. The college is aware of most of its areas for development. Governors are now well-informed and fulfil their duties satisfactorily.

### **The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection**

11. The college has made satisfactory progress to address the issues raised in the previous inspection. The principal provides good leadership but the management of the curriculum, although satisfactory, is still developing. Accreditation opportunities for learners have recently improved. Provision for learners who need specialist therapy input has improved, particularly for those learners who need additional communication support. A quality improvement process has been put in place and teaching and learning are now satisfactory. The systematic analysis and monitoring of data remain underdeveloped. Governance has improved. Although costed plans are in place, the college still does not yet fully meet the requirements of SENDA.

### **Key strengths of the college**

#### ***Strengths***

- good development of learners' independent living skills
- good development of learner confidence and appropriate teamworking and behavioural skills
- effective practical lessons
- good use of cultural activities to broaden learner experience
- supportive pastoral and welfare systems
- clear leadership and strategic direction
- good partnerships with local colleges
- effective opportunities for learners to contribute their views and make choices
- good attention to language and cultural needs of Welsh learners.

## Areas for improvement

### *The college should address:*

- insufficient opportunities for learners to gain appropriate qualifications
- underdeveloped system to record learners' progress
- insufficient links between residential and daytime learning
- inflexibility of curriculum to meet individual needs and provide progression
- inadequate preparation for and monitoring of work placements
- lack of a formal personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme
- insufficient monitoring of transition arrangements
- slow progress to implement SENDA requirements
- underdeveloped use of data for planning and monitoring.

## Main findings

### Achievements and standards

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

12. Student achievement is satisfactory. Learners are developing good independent living skills and confidence in doing things for themselves or with limited support. They generally interact well with each other and with the wider community. There are good examples of students who have learned to manage their own behaviour successfully.
13. Learners are successfully achieving work related skills, such as working in teams and dealing with customers and visitors. They can use practical equipment and information technology. Examples include: recording their work on digital cameras, using tills in the college shop or on work placements and setting up camping and sports equipment for the Duke of Edinburgh award. They are developing an awareness of healthy eating through work in the college gardens. Students contribute well to college life through the student council and other activities, such as setting up the college Eisteddfod which involved preparing costumes and setting up musical and sound equipment.
14. The college recognises that there are not enough opportunities for learners to have their achievements accredited, where appropriate. There has been recent improvement in this aspect of the college work. In 2006, twelve learners gained qualifications in literacy, numeracy or communication. Learners working on NVQ programmes are achieving units or in some cases whole awards. However, there are still missed opportunities for some learners to gain national recognised qualifications that will help them progress in their future lives.
15. Systems for recording learner achievement are improving but the college recognises there are gaps. Progress towards achievement of qualifications is well documented but there is not sufficient rigour in recording the wider skills learners are achieving. Records of learning exist for each lesson and learners are increasingly involved in the process. However, records are not always completed well. In addition, there is not an effective system for recording achievements that take place in the residential aspect of the learners' programmes.

### Quality of provision

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

16. Inspectors found the college's assessment that most teaching and learning are satisfactory to be accurate. The college has a number of measures in place to improve teaching and learning, which are having a positive impact. The majority of staff hold appropriate teaching qualifications and the rest are working towards gaining them. Staff development is well focused on improving teaching and learning. This includes regular opportunities to share good practice.



17. There are some very effective lessons. These are carefully planned, often with detailed plans for each of the learners. In these lessons, there is a clear focus on practical activities and realistic work environments which help the students to develop their skills and make progress. Teachers are becoming more skilful at including literacy and numeracy work within their lessons but some staff need more training on this aspect of the work. In the less effective lessons plans are too general and do not focus sufficiently on the needs of individuals. Learners spend too much time waiting for their turn to be involved or carrying out tasks set for the whole group. This leads to boredom and little learning in some cases. Targets set in workplace learning are the same for all learners; they relate to tasks to be carried out not the development of skills.
18. Learning support assistants are very effective in supporting learners in many lessons. They are skilled at helping learners to understand and carry out tasks without doing too much of the work for them. The college is aware that the delivery of learning support is less successful in some lessons and training plans are in place to address this.
19. Assessment takes place regularly and students are being increasingly involved in discussions about the progress they are making. An internal verification system has recently been put in place. However, targets against which progress is monitored are not always sufficiently challenging. The college is aware that there is not enough specialist expertise involved in the initial assessments that inform the target setting for individual learners. There are plans in place to address this. The college is also developing ways to better integrate learner progress in evening and weekend activities into the overall assessment system.
20. Overall, the provision is satisfactorily matched to learners' needs and interests. The college has good links with other colleges and external organisations in order to offer learners a wider curriculum. Learners attend local colleges to take part in NVQ catering and computer classes. The local youth service gives valuable support to the recently introduced Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Learners who speak Welsh have opportunities to use their language and there is an increased attention to the Welsh dimension in the curriculum. Since the last inspection, the college has increased the accreditation on offer to learners. This now includes NVQs in catering, housekeeping, animal care and horticulture, and qualifications in literacy, numeracy, communications and skills for working life. However, there are still learners capable of gaining accreditation who leave college without having achieved qualifications that would help them progress in their future lives. The curriculum lacks flexibility in the way it is organised. Some lessons are too long for learners. There are too few opportunities for learners to progress through a range of courses at different levels. On occasion learners repeat work that they have already completed at school.
21. There is good use of cultural activities to broaden learner experience. Many of these activities are provided by close working with the local community. These activities introduce learners to interests that will sustain them in later life. The

student council gives learners good opportunities to be consulted, understand the democratic process and prepare to be active citizens. Learners are involved in improvements to college buildings, planning the extended curriculum and tackling bullying. Learners throughout the college make an important contribution by raising funds for charities of their own choice.

22. Recent links with Denbigh Young Enterprise are helping to support vocational learning. The college has established good relationships with local employers in order to give learners opportunities to experience the world of work in a variety of settings. These include charity shops and a local hospital. However, employers are not sufficiently consulted in planning learner programmes and monitoring their progress. The college does not have links with local work-based training companies.
23. Learners receive satisfactory support and guidance. They benefit from appropriate induction with taster sessions. This helps them make informed choices and settle quickly into college life. Keyworkers explain the college's equal opportunities and complaints policy to learners but there are no formal arrangements to make sure that all learners have a good understanding of the policies or to revisit them at regular intervals.
24. Pastoral and welfare support is strong. Learners appreciate the help they receive with housing and benefits, managing money and personal appearance. Good links with Careers Wales and Connexions and preparation by personal tutors help learners to make smooth transitions when they leave college. However, the transition process is not carefully recorded or evaluated. This means that the college is unable to assess how well the process is working and what needs to be improved.
25. There are satisfactory arrangements for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. A small group of targeted learners benefit from a useful course on sexual relationships and there is informal work with learners on sexual health issues as and when they arise. However, there is no formal personal, social and health education programme designed to help learners deal with issues which will impact on their lives. There is no central point in college where learners can have open access to youth information such as leaflets on health issues, benefit entitlements and local activities.
26. Since the last inspection learners have benefited from the introduction of good support from a range of therapists. This valuable support has enabled many learners to communicate with others more effectively and be more involved in their lessons and the life of the college.
27. Staff give learners good support with managing their behaviour. The new promoting positive behaviour policy includes the identification of triggers and strategies to deal effectively with behaviour that challenges.

## Leadership and management

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

28. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal provides good leadership. A clear vision and direction is shared by the principal, senior managers, governors and staff. The detailed three-year strategic plan is linked to the direct interests of the learners. Recent appointments in the management of curriculum, quality, data management and other aspects are beginning to have a positive impact on strengthening provision. The development of external partnerships extends the range of activities available to learners. The Skills for Life strategy is becoming embedded across curriculum areas. The management of health and safety in the college is satisfactory overall but risk assessments on work placements are underdeveloped.
29. Since the previous inspection, there has been a good focus on continuous improvement. The lesson observation process is thorough. Observations are broadly accurate, cover relevant issues constructively and provide comprehensive, detailed and supportive feedback. Observation includes reports on the implementation of the Skills for Life strategy and the promotion of equality and diversity. However, actions to address issues arising from observations needs further development, as does the observation of support workers during extended curriculum activities. The quality improvement cycle which involves a monthly framework of management reviews has supported continuous improvement. However, this cycle is too complex and there is scope for a more streamlined approach to ensure a timely response to identified issues. The self-assessment process now actively involves all staff and governors and is accurate in its evaluation of provision.
30. Most staff are appropriately qualified and most teachers now have teacher training qualifications. Since the previous inspection, specialist staff with a good level of expertise have been appointed. A satisfactory appraisal system supports improvement in staff performance. Opportunities for staff development are good. Communications at all levels across the college are improved although the college is aware of the need to develop this further.
31. The college meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. However, it does not fully comply with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) in terms of accessibility to its facilities. A costed action plan of the necessary work is in place, funding has been secured and a project officer has been appointed to oversee the work. Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted in the curriculum. The college pays good attention to the Welsh dimension in the curriculum. Staff and governors have had training on equality and diversity. More recently, the college has monitored the performance of different groups of learners by gender and ethnicity. The management information system is currently being reviewed but the analysis and monitoring of data remain underdeveloped. Arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults are satisfactory.

32. Governors are well-informed and fulfil their duties satisfactorily. The links between the governors and the college have improved since the previous inspection. Appropriate sub-groups are now established. Governors receive reports on educational matters and learners' progress. Monitoring of financial management has improved and is now satisfactory. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

## Curriculum area inspections

### Pre-Vocational skills

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

#### Context

33. Learners undertake pre-vocational skills to help prepare them for their future lives. They can choose from a range of subjects including daily living skills, music, advocacy and transition, horticulture, drama, social communications, Welsh and information technology. They also undertake work experience, both in college and with external employers. The college has started to integrate the development of communication and number skills into the pre-vocational skills curriculum.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- good development of learners' confidence and independence
- much good individual support for learners
- effective use of practical activities to promote learning.

#### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- missed opportunities for learners to achieve qualifications
- inadequate review and recording of learners' progress
- insufficiently flexible timetable to meet learner needs.

#### **Achievements and standards**

34. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Development of learners' confidence and independence are good. Learners work confidently in lessons and respond well to staff. Outside the classroom they are confident to talk to new people, to introduce themselves and to ask questions. Learners are able to use computers and digital cameras. The college has increased the number of qualifications it offers to learners. However, there are still missed opportunities for learners to have their skills suitably accredited.

#### **Quality of provision**

35. Teaching and learning and learner support and guidance are satisfactory. In the most effective lessons there are clear individual targets. Regular changes in activity motivate learners. Practical activities are used well to develop confidence, practical skills and communication and number skills. Learners benefit from opportunities to work in the college shop and other college services. The range of learning opportunities is satisfactory but timetabling is not sufficiently flexible to meet all learners' needs. Lessons are sometimes too long for learners with short attention spans. Tutorials are usually held at times when learners are too tired to fully benefit from them. The college recognises this and is planning to change aspects of delivering its curriculum. There is

good individual learning support in many lessons and residential activities. Prompts and questions are often used well to encourage learning as independently as possible. Support from specialists helps staff to develop effective learning materials. In less effective lessons, individual targets are not set or are set inappropriately. In a few lessons staff are too quick to help learners; they do not give them sufficient time to try for themselves. Absence of support staff is not always covered and this impacts on learning for the whole group. There is a clear focus on learner choice to encourage independence. However, in a few lessons this leads to lack of structure. Recording and reviewing of learners' progress and achievement are insufficiently thorough. Individual learning plans and records of learning are in the early stages of development. Some staff contributions to records of learning are detailed and useful, but others focus too much on what has been done rather than the skills that have been developed.

### **Leadership and management**

36. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been a clear focus on improvement since the last inspection leading to more effective teaching and learning. Training and support are helping staff to integrate opportunities for learners to develop communication and number skills. However, this is not yet effective in all areas. Individual teams meet regularly but arrangements to ensure communication across the college are new. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Teachers consider this in their lesson planning, but relevant aspects are more fully implemented in some lessons than others. Quality assurance is satisfactory overall. The college self-assessment report is broadly accurate.

## Vocational Skills

**Satisfactory: grade 3**

### Context

37. Learners are offered NVQs in animal care, catering and hospitality, housekeeping and horticulture and the college has recently introduced a Skills for Working Life qualification. They also undertake an internal or external work placement. The internal work placements include work in the college office and kitchens, horticulture and garden maintenance. External placements take place in a variety of work venues such as charity shops, a primary school and hotels.

### **STRENGTHS**

- good development of confidence and behaviour management
- effective promotion of independent learning
- good use of practical resources for teaching and learning.

### **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- insufficient monitoring of learner progress
- poor recording of learning in the workplace
- insufficient sharing of information with employers.

### **Achievement and standards**

38. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners are making significant gains in confidence and management of their behaviour. There has been a recent increase in the range of accredited qualifications available to learners. Of those who are taking accreditation in 2006, the majority have achieved units towards their qualifications. One group of learners has completed all the units to achieve an NVQ 1 in catering and hospitality. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and improving. Some learners have progressed to independent travel and are able to take more responsibility for their own personal care. However, some learners in work placements are repeating work and not extending their skills.

### **Quality of provision**

39. Teaching and learning and the range of provision on offer are satisfactory overall. In the better lessons learners work on individual tasks at an appropriate level for their ability. They are well stimulated and motivated. Staff actively promote independent learning and give learners the opportunity to try out new skills. In some lessons there is insufficient differentiation to provide for the needs of the more and less able members of the group. Practical resources, such as the college owned guesthouse and shop, provide realistic learning opportunities. In some lessons there is well-planned integration of literacy, numeracy, communication and information technology with realistic targets for each learner.

40. Support and guidance are satisfactory, with particular strengths in personal and welfare support. Learners also benefit from the increased specialist help available, for example from speech and occupational therapists. Monitoring of learning is under-developed. Learners' records do not fully capture achievement and individual learning plans are not always changed to reflect progression. The college has been very successful in increasing the number of learners undertaking work placements. However, targets for work placements are identical for each learner and there are no three-way reviews of progress between the learner, the college and the employer.

### **Leadership and management**

41. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been recent changes to the management of the area and a number of improvements have been put in place. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Communications are satisfactory and there are good links with the local careers service. Management of the learning support assistants is satisfactory overall; however, in a few cases when staff are absent, cover arrangements are not put in place quickly enough. Quality assurance is generally satisfactory, although the checking of the quality of the learners' experience in the workplace is under-developed.