



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

**Pembrokeshire College
Merlins Bridge
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA61 1SZ**

Date of inspection: February 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 provider'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 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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Context

Pembrokeshire College is a general college of further education and offers a range of further, higher, adult community learning and work-based learning programmes. The college has around 2,000 full-time and around 6,500 part-time learners from a wide geographical area including Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. Fifty-two per cent of full-time learners are male and 48% female. Thirty-seven per cent of part-time learners are male and 63% female. Around 100 learners are recruited from overseas every year. Around 85% of learners on full-time programmes are aged 16-19. The majority of learners are studying programmes at levels 2 or 3.

The college delivers programmes at the main campus in Haverfordwest, at the Marine and Information Technology Centre (MITEC) in Milford Haven and at around 50 outcentres. Around 7.5% of full-time and 5.1% of part-time learners at the college speak Welsh as their first language.

The population of Pembrokeshire is increasing generally, but declining for those under 16. Unemployment rates at around 6% and are lower than the rest of Wales. Economic activity rates are similar to the rest of Wales at around 23%. The percentage of the population of the area living in areas classed in the 10% most deprived parts of Wales is low at 2%. The percentage for Wales is around 9.7%.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Good
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The current performance of the college is good because:

- standards in the main qualifications have improved steadily over the past three years and college unverified data for 2009-2010 show high successful completion rates;
- standards achieved by learners on adult community learning programmes are excellent;
- the proportion of learners achieving higher grades on vocational and academic programmes is good and is improving;
- Learners' oral, written and practical skills observed in classrooms and workshops are good;
- learners attend the college regularly, feel safe and healthy at the college and enjoy their learning;
- managers at all levels provide good leadership; and
- the college has good arrangements for evaluating and improving the quality of its provision.

Prospects for improvement

The college's prospects for improvement are good because:

- learners' success rates have improved steadily over the past three years;
- leaders and managers have a successful track record in identifying areas for improvement and managing change;
- the college has clear priorities and targets for improvement in its strategic and operational plans; and
- the college has excellent resources to deliver the improvements they have identified.

Recommendations

The college needs to:

- R1 Improve completion and attainment rates across all programmes to achieve the aims stated in the college's strategic plans.
- R2 Improve the delivery and attainment of key skills, particularly the completion and accreditation of communication skills.
- R3 Make sure that learners receive the best quality teaching across all programmes.
- R4 Increase the number of learners completing part or all of their assessments through the medium of Welsh.

What happens next?

The college will include the recommendations from the inspection into their quality development plans. The college link inspector will monitor the college's progress in implementing these recommendations and in particular, the completion and attainment rates across all programmes.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Overall, the rates at which learners on further education programmes complete and attain their qualifications are at or near to other colleges in Wales. Completion and attainment rates across the college have improved steadily over the past three years in line with other colleges in Wales. The rates at which learners on adult community learning (ACL) programmes complete and attain their qualifications are excellent and have been for the past three years.

Learners' attainment on vocational courses has improved significantly this year and is now at or near to other colleges in Wales. The proportion of learners achieving Distinction and Merit grades in National Diploma courses is good and is improving. Learners attainment on AS and A2 courses compares well with other providers and learners' performance in most subjects are in line with predictions based on their previous GCSE attainment. College unverified data for 2009-2010 shows that successful completion rates have improved significantly to 85% for all courses and to 91% for short courses. This shows an improvement of over ten percentage points from 2007-2008. Similarly, college unverified data shows a significant improvement in the successful completion of key skills awards to around 70%, an improvement of over seventeen percentage points from 2007-2008.

Learners' successful completion of key skills awards was adequate in 2008-2009 and improved slightly in the following year. Learners' achievement of awards in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Application of Number (AON) were satisfactory in 2008-2009, but unsatisfactory in communication. However, the majority of learners successfully complete their key skills qualifications as a result of their participation in the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. The majority of learners develop their key skills at a level appropriate to their needs. The rates at which learners complete and attain the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification are good and are similar to other colleges in Wales.

Success rates for learners from deprived areas compares well with all college learners. Similarly, learners from disability groups perform very well with success rates of 86% and 88% for learners with moderate and specific learning difficulties respectively. Learners in receipt of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) outperformed other learners in 2008-2009, but success rates for the two groups were similar in the following year.

Most learners make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge on vocational and academic programmes. Generally, learners' oral, written and practical skills are good and they develop them well in whole class and group sessions. They apply their knowledge and skills well in classrooms and workshops to solve problems and to research new topics and tasks. The progression rates from level 1 to level 2 and from level 2 to level 3 are good and many learners progress from level 3 courses to employment or higher education. Learners develop good ICT

skills and use them well to research and present their work. Many learners develop good vocational skills and use them effectively to compete and win national awards in World Skills events.

There are a few first language Welsh speakers at the college. Learners develop their bilingual skills well on programmes where they are needed for their training and work placements. However, not enough learners complete their coursework or assignments in Welsh.

Wellbeing: Excellent

The college has a comprehensive health and wellbeing strategy. The college has a wide range of support services and multi agency partnerships to support the strategy. Learners feel safe at college and in their workplaces. They are clear about where they can seek help and whom to contact if they need support or have issues about health and safety.

College staff pay good attention to learners' emotional and physical well being. The college offers a full-time counselling service to learners. A full-time nurse based on the campus runs a "drop in" centre for learners to visit if they are concerned about their health or well being. The college Sports Academies offer good nutritional and fitness advice.

Almost all learners enjoy their learning, particularly in practical sessions. Learners behave well in class and talk with enthusiasm about their learning experiences. Most learners have a positive and professional attitude to completing their tasks. Learners work well together in small teams, pairs or whole class activities. They treat each other with respect and are aware of their responsibilities, particularly when mentoring younger learners.

Most learners are punctual and attend college regularly. College staff monitor attendance well. Student Support Services, or the college nurse, follow up persistent poor or non-notified attendance effectively. Current overall attendance is good at around 86%.

Many learners contribute to a wide range of community activities organised by the college, including fundraising for charities, working with National Parks officers and contributing to local food festivals. Many learners develop their community skills very well through their work with younger learners and coaching them in a range of sports activities at primary and special schools. Learners enjoy these activities and engage well with their local community.

The activities of the college Learner Voice Committee are excellent. The committee meets regularly and makes a positive contribution to college life. Committee members identify and take action on a number of academic and social issues raised by learners. Learners have a strong sense of involvement in the decision making process at the college and are confident that the senior managers take their views seriously. Members of the senior management team (SMT) attend the meetings to give feedback on progress towards issues raised and actions they have taken. The committee was keen to acknowledge the support of senior managers, in particular

when issues have been difficult to address and the way they work with learners to find creative solutions.

Learners engage and interact well with their peers, tutors, and customers. Learners working in realistic working environments (RWE), such as Hospitality and Catering and Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, demonstrate appropriate professional skills that help them to improve their communication, confidence and self esteem.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

Overall, the curriculum meets the needs of learners, employers and the community very well. The college offers a wide range of further-education courses from entry level to level four across a number of learning areas. It offers work-based learning programmes and a comprehensive programme of adult community learning. Around 20% of full-time learners across a range of courses study the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) at foundation, intermediate or advanced levels.

All learners have good opportunities to progress to the next level of study, to higher education, training or employment.

The college collaborates well with a large number of partners and organisations to extend learning opportunities for 14 to 19-year-old learners. The college is successful in securing additional funding to support a wide range of curriculum initiatives. This funding allows it to manage and deliver a range of programmes for the education, training and social needs of youngsters who have not achieved previously, disadvantaged young people and learners with disabilities. The Rising Tide project delivered at the MITEC centre uses Interreg funding very well to provide intensive 10-week training for learners who are disengaged from formal education or training.

All learners have an initial assessment when they come to college to identify their levels of literacy and numeracy. The college uses the results of the initial assessment well to plan the development of learners' essential skills and to identify individual support needs.

The college gives learners good opportunities to develop and improve their essential skills. All full-time learners undertake a range of essential skills qualifications. Where appropriate, learners study essential skills at a level higher than their main course. The college supports learners well to develop wider skills that improve, for example, their self-confidence and employability.

The college promotes education for sustainable development and global citizenship well. All full-time learners have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of related topics during their induction programmes and lessons. They complete a variety of projects and activities to increase their awareness of environmental and social issues. Learners carry out work in other countries to support communities, participate in fund raising events for charity and work with community groups.

The college is working to develop its Welsh language provision and to help learners maintain and improve their Welsh language skills. Learners are able to have their initial assessment and learning support in Welsh, and have opportunities to participate in bilingual tutorials. They have access to good bilingual learning materials. Learners on the WBQ are able to study for qualifications in the Welsh language. On childcare courses, a bilingual mentor assists vocational tutors in the classroom to support Welsh-speaking learners. However, the provision for Welsh language development and the promotion of the Welsh dimension varies too much across courses and learning areas.

All full-time learners follow a programme of work-related activities. Learners complete appropriate work experience where it is a compulsory element of their programmes. Teachers arrange realistic work experiences for learners on vocational courses. For example, learners on business administration course carry out routine administrative duties for teachers. The college arranges placements and shadowing experiences for learners if they are interested in pursuing a specific career, such as medicine or law, and uses learners' part-time work experiences well to support their college work. The college encourages and supports learners well if they want to find their own placement or voluntary work placement.

Teaching: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and the teaching in a few lessons is excellent. All teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. They prepare their lessons well and have detailed lesson plans and schemes of work that identify opportunities for learners to develop their essential skills, and understanding of sustainability issues. Lessons are structured well and teachers set clear aims and objectives that they share with learners at the start of their lessons.

Most teachers engage and maintain learners' interest well in their lessons. They use a good range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies in their lessons, including whole-class activities, individual and group work. Teachers support their learners well to develop their oral communication and independent learning skills. Teachers take good account of the different abilities of learners. However, in a small number of classes, teachers do not differentiate the work well enough to cater for the wide range of learners' abilities, or to engage fully the most able and talented learners.

Most teachers relate essential skills development well to learners' main qualifications. However, in a few cases, teachers do not integrate and contextualise essential skills well enough into a vocational context.

Learning support assistants work well with learners and teachers to help learners to progress in their studies. Teachers use resources well to support learning.

Nearly all teachers use questioning techniques well in their classes to test learners' progress and understanding.

All teachers assess learners' work regularly and give learners good verbal feedback. Generally, teachers' written feedback is helpful and constructive. However, in a few

cases, teachers' feedback does not have enough detail, and learners are not informed of what they need to do to improve their written work. Most teachers keep comprehensive records of learners' achievements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Overall, the college has good arrangements for care, support and guidance.

Learners receive fair, clear and impartial advice from skilled independent advisers when they apply to study at the college. The college provides good support for learners when they make applications to higher education. A well-structured induction programme helps learners to learn about the college and all the services that are available for them. The college has a very good range of general and specialist services for supporting learners and they work together well to support learners who face barriers to learning. All learners know who to contact to seek advice and value the support they receive.

The college promotes healthy eating and the benefits of exercise well through promotional campaigns as well as ensuring that learners have a good choice of healthy eating options. Learners on the WBQ follow a structured programme on health education. Other learners have similar opportunities to learn about these issues on their programmes, but not in the same structured delivery.

Learners feel safe in the college. The college has good and appropriate procedures for supporting and challenging learners whose attendance is not good enough. The college's procedures for dealing with any potential bullying and harassment are comprehensive and effective.

The college's tutorial system is effective in supporting learners' progress. All learners have regular individual tutorials and a weekly group tutorial. The college is piloting an on-line individual learning plan which provides a detailed and comprehensive record of learners' progress and records agreed targets.

The college supports learners with additional learning needs very well. Staff identify learners with additional needs when they first contact the college and they tailor the support well to address learners' individual needs. Around three quarters of learners identified as needing additional support take up the offer.

The college has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Excellent

The college provides an inclusive environment for all of its learners. It has a strong, positive ethos and a welcoming culture that supports equality of opportunity and diversity across all areas of its provision.

Staff and learners have a good understanding of equality and show a high level of respect for each other. They are fully aware of the college's equal opportunities policy which is implemented effectively through induction with learners and through effective training with staff.

International learners are integrated well into the college community.

The college provides a very good learning environment and excellent learning resources to support effective teaching and learning. All areas of the college are attractive and well-maintained. Nearly all classrooms have very good ICT equipment.

Communal areas of the college are very attractive and pleasant and are respected and used well by learners.

Nearly all vocational areas have excellent facilities that reflect current industry requirements.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

Managers and leaders provide good leadership. The principal and senior managers are an experienced team and they set a clear direction for the college. They work very well together to provide clear leadership to all other staff. They know the colleges' strengths and weaknesses well and have identified clear strategies for improvement.

College managers work very effectively together to set clear objectives and targets for improvement. Management roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by staff and the college has a culture that is inclusive, open and collaborative. Managers and leaders are confident and effective in their roles. Strategic and operational planning is good. The strategic plan states clearly the goals for the college and for each directorate. This is reflected well in the operational plan which is produced with the involvement of a wide range of staff. Leaders at all levels take ownership of targets for improvements and learner performance has shown a steady upward trend over the past 3 years.

Governors are well informed about their responsibilities. They have a good mix of skills and a range of experience. They receive information that allows them to monitor progress against targets effectively. They are aware of those areas of performance where the college needs to improve. They show that they clearly understand the performance of learners and expect information presented to them to be compared to national benchmarks. The governors show a sound understanding of the roles of senior managers and the challenges they face and consider them to be very effective.

The college has responded very well to national and local priorities for the transformation of education in Pembrokeshire. The college has taken a lead role in several projects, including the establishment of an effective 14-19 federation with the local education authority and local schools. It is forming effective relationships with the local higher education provider. It is leading on a work-based learning consortium involving another college and several independent work-based learning providers to improve work-based learning opportunities in the region. The college has worked well to promote a range of local partnerships.

Improving quality: Good

Overall, the college has good arrangements to evaluate the quality of its provision and listens very well to the views of learners and employers. All programmes elect a course representative and these benefit from NUS Wales training. This helps them to carry out their roles very effectively.

The college has an effective strategy for listening to the views of learners. The college is a lead pilot centre for the Learner Voice National Participation Standards. Learner representatives attend the bi-monthly Learner Voice Committee and course team meetings. They contribute well to these. All meetings have appropriate agendas and clear action points which are acted upon. These are displayed on posters in college communal areas and on the college intranet.

The college carries out learner evaluations of provision at key stages and uses 'student talking days' and learner focus groups to good effect. Members of the senior management team visit classes regularly to find out the views of learners on their college experiences. Outcomes of these activities are shared with staff in all directorates and with the governing body.

The college takes good account of the views of staff when assessing learner performance and outcomes through extensive consultation and the effective use of data and staff surveys.

The college carries out regular and comprehensive reviews of the performance of all courses. These include the effective use of data to analyse outcomes against national benchmarks. These reviews are used well to prepare the self-assessment reports at director level and the overall college self-assessment report. The Curriculum and Standards Committee provides appropriate challenge to college performance, particularly where there are areas of concern.

There are clear and effective links between strategic planning, self assessment and course reviews.

The college has a robust classroom observation system with detailed analysis of teaching and learning. These identify areas for improvement clearly. The proportion of teaching sessions judged to be excellent by the college suggests that judgements in these observations are sometimes over generous.

Overall, there has been a steady upward trend in success rates over the last 3 years. Although there has been a steady improvement on long course success rates, they remain at national benchmarks. Key skills data show a steady improvement in success rates over the past 3 years. However, they are still at or below the most recent national benchmarks.

The college has responded well to the recommendations made in the last inspection report.

The college engages well in a wide range of professional learning communities, both regionally and nationally, to benchmark their performance and to share good

practice. These include Colegau Cymru, the National Training Federation for Wales, the Local Education Authority (LEA), schools and other further and higher education institutions.

Partnership working: Excellent

The college has developed very effective and long-standing partnerships with a wide range of organisations. It is continuing to forge new and effective partnerships. These partnerships exist at both strategic and operational levels. Locally, these include the LEA, schools and the local 14-19 learning networks.

The college leads well on the Haverfordwest Federation and is working well with the LEA and schools in the north of the county to deliver a range of vocational and academic course options.

The college has reacted well to the challenges brought about by the regionalisation of higher education. It is in detailed discussions with a local higher education institution on a range of collaborative projects that include validating the college's higher education provision.

The college has a history of close working with other further education colleges through organisations such as Colegau Cymru. It works closely with further education colleges in south west Wales and the Regional Learning Partnerships (RLP) to improve bids for European project funding. The college works particularly closely with one other further education college to deliver higher education programmes jointly.

The college has recently led a consortium consisting of another further education college, a work-based learning provider and a charitable organisation to tender for the delivery of work-based learning in the region.

The college works well with overseas partners and enrolls around 100 learners every year. The college works closely with industry and delivers specialist courses for the petrochemical industries. It has worked with industrial partners in Peru and is working with an awarding body to develop internationally marketable materials and qualifications.

The college has worked very well with industrial partners and specialist systems designers to develop and install an excellent, state-of-the-art, plant control room simulator for the petrochemical industry at Haverfordwest and excellent real-life fabrication, welding and maintenance facilities at Milford Haven.

The college worked very well with industrial partners to establish the Pembrokeshire Energy Workforce Development Group in response to the DCELLS Haven Spatial Plan. This has enabled the group to gain European funding to up skill the workforce in this important local sector.

Strategic and operational planning involves close working with third-party providers on an annual basis. This makes sure that together they set targets that are realistic, but challenging and they monitor their progress closely. Joint planning and

monitoring takes place with all the college partners to improve and maintain standards. This includes the Haverfordwest Federation where managers work well with schools and LEA officers to maintain high standards and to make sure that the provision is financially viable.

Resource management: Good

The college manages its resources very well. Financial planning is strong and managers use benchmarking information well to prioritise the allocation of resources in line with the strategic plan. Budgets are delegated appropriately and monitored effectively. The college seeks alternative sources of income very well which is leading to less reliance on Welsh Assembly Government Funding.

The college has an appropriate number of well-qualified and experienced staff. The college deploys staff effectively and there are good links between curriculum directorates and human resources to ensure that staff utilization makes the best use of staff time and skills.

The staff development programme is good and reflects organisational and national priorities well. All staff are entitled to 10 days scholarly activity in order to improve the learner experience. Support for staff and occupational health is very good and staff absenteeism is one of the lowest in the sector.

Overall, accommodation in teaching and social areas is very good and there is a well-considered plan for improving the quality of the college estate. The college places an important emphasis on sustainability. As a result, significant savings have been made on operational costs which have been reinvested well to improve the learning environment for the benefit of learners.

The college is developing effective shared services partnerships in single tendering and very good work has been undertaken in energy efficiency leading to substantial savings.

The college manages its finances very well and has made significant reductions in its operating budgets. These savings have been used effectively to provide resources of high quality and an excellent learning environment. It has enabled the college to establish a tier of managers with specific responsibility for improvements to the curriculum and the quality of learners' experience. Outcomes for learners are good. Although outcomes for learners are improving in line with other colleges in Wales, the college manages its finances and resources very well and offers excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner Satisfaction

Learners comment favourably on the college in the pre-inspection questionnaires. Almost all learners recommend the college to other people. Learners comment favourably on the advice and information they received from the college prior to enrolment. They praise the support and guidance they received from their course tutors. Learners feel that they have very good access to the resources that they need to complete their courses. Almost all learners feel safe and free from harassment at the college. Ninety-three per cent of learners who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they enjoy their learning at the college.

Appendix 2

F0009017: Pembrokeshire College

	2007-08			2008-09		
	Terminated Learning Activities	College Success Rate	National Comparator	Terminated Learning Activities	Success Rate	National Comparator
Success rates in long courses by sector/subject area						
Health, Public Services and Care	655	64%	67%	685	64%	76%
Science and Mathematics	410	63%	65%	440	63%	71%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	165	67%	57%	105	76%	74%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	565	63%	67%	560	71%	75%
Construction, Planning and the Built	515	71%	71%	445	71%	74%
Information and Communication Technology	580	71%	64%	265	72%	73%
Retailing and Customer Service	75	80%	72%	60	92%	74%
Hair and Beauty	285	67%	67%	255	63%	75%
Hospitality and Catering	135	41%	68%	265	36%	72%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	135	67%	69%	360	74%	78%
Performing Arts	70	57%	73%	65	69%	73%
Art and Design	455	79%	72%	305	79%	78%
History, Philosophy and Theology	40	50%	52%	145	52%	77%
Social Sciences	30	83%	74%	35	71%	76%
Welsh, English and Other Languages	260	62%	68%	150	80%	73%
Education and Training	100	65%	65%	130	65%	76%
Independent Living Skills	55	64%	55%	0	.	78%
Foundation for Work	380	47%	65%	480	97%	76%
Business, Administration and Law	740	72%	68%	615	80%	71%
Unspecified Sector/Subject Area	40	38%	36%	20	50%	70%
All Long Courses	5,685	66%	67%	5,395	71%	75%
Success rates by notional level, learning aim length						
Entry Level (long)	360	85%	73%	685	98%	80%
Level 1 (long)	1,195	73%	69%	645	78%	78%
Level 2 (long)	1,825	56%	65%	1,990	66%	73%
Level 3 (long)	2,135	68%	67%	1,935	65%	73%
Level 4 + (long)	115	65%	53%	105	48%	63%
Level not known (long)	50	50%	39%	40	63%	69%
All Long	5,685	66%	67%	5,395	71%	75%
All Short	5,580	86%	77%	4,875	90%	85%
e-learning aims	1,160	70%	46%	625	90%	58%
All learning aims	12,425	75%	70%	10,895	81%	78%

. denotes not applicable.

Source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Huw Collins HMI	Reporting Inspector
Una Connolly HMI	Team Inspector
Eleanor Davies HMI	Team Inspector
Sandra Barnard HMI	Team Inspector
Bernard Hayward HMI	Team Inspector
Christine Hooper HMI	Team Inspector
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Lawrence Wood	Peer Inspector
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