

A report on

National Star in Wales - Mamhilad

**Star College- National Star Mamhilad
Ground floor
Block A
Caerleon House
Mamhilad Park Estate
Pontypool Torfaen
NP4 0HZ**

Date of inspection: February 2025

by

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

About National Star in Wales - Mamhilad

National Star in Wales is a specialist further education day college. It provides placements for 15 learners aged 16 to 25 years with a range of needs, including complex learning difficulties, physical disabilities and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).

The college curriculum offers personalised learning pathways with goals for learning and independent living. The college's mission is 'to enable people with disabilities to realise their potential through personalised learning, transition and destination services'.

The college is located on the Mamhilad Park Estate, near Pontypool. The accommodation is spread across three different locations within two buildings. It includes classrooms, therapy rooms, a sensory room, a common room, breakout rooms, a small outdoor space and a kitchen and life skills suite.

National Star in Wales is part of National Star Foundation and shares key functions with National Star College. These include technical services, estates management, human resources, health and safety management, staff training and development, and financial support.

Overall strategic leadership for the college is provided by the director of services and National Star senior management team.

The college has a head of learning and support and a curriculum manager who oversee the day-to-day operations of the college. The curriculum manager has been in post since September 2022.

The college was last inspected in October 2022.

Inspectors' judgements on this limited inspection should not prejudice the findings of a future full Section 77 inspection.

Main findings

Strengths

Learners at National Star College in Wales demonstrate highly positive attitudes to their learning. Nearly all engage enthusiastically with learning activities and respond well to staff feedback. They are welcoming and polite to peers, staff and visitors.

Staff develop highly positive, mutually respectful relationships with learners based on a secure understanding of their needs. They are positive role models for learners, demonstrating patience and sensitivity in their work. Nearly all staff have consistently high expectations of learners' independence. This is a notable strength of the college.

The college has made suitable adjustments to the curriculum offer to ensure that it is more meaningful for all learners. There has been an improvement in the suitability of the content of lessons and a clearer purpose to learning activities. This is strongest where learners are active in their learning, for example where learners practise crossing the road safely, build flat-pack furniture or prepare a healthy meal.

The consistent support and strong communication provided by the curriculum manager are valued by staff.

Areas for development

The location and configuration of both internal and external spaces at the college limit opportunities for learners to develop a wide range of independence skills and consistently access the full range of college resources. For example, learners are unable to move between different buildings across the business park independently.

There is insufficient attention to how subject content is delivered. For example, learners' files show an over-reliance on worksheets and low-level activities such as cutting and sticking.

Leaders do not consistently evaluate the impact of new initiatives and professional learning on teaching and learning and adjust practice in a timely manner.

Recommendations

The college should:

- R1. Review the use of the learning environment to improve the experience of learners
- R2. Strengthen lesson delivery with a focus on meaningful activities
- R3. Strengthen the use of quality assurance outcomes to make timely improvements

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

R1. Ensure that learning activities are purposeful and in line with learner need and aspiration

Since the time of the core inspection, tutors and leaders have strengthened the college curriculum offer with a suitable focus on ensuring that learning activities are purposeful and in line with learner need and aspiration. For example, learners develop important money management skills, which they practise in the community, or develop employability skills in enterprise sessions.

Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of each learner's aspirations and future destinations and plan suitably to support progress. However, too often learners complete low-level paper-based tasks, such as cutting and sticking, which do not support the progressive development of their independence, skills or understanding.

R2. Broaden the range of learning experiences to ensure that these provide learners with meaningful opportunities to develop their independent living skills

Since the time of the core inspection the college has made beneficial changes to the learning environment to improve learners' opportunities to develop their independent living skills. For example, in addition to cooking and laundry in the main college area, learners can now develop their life skills in the college independent living skills flat.

Further, whole-college thematic planning has a suitable focus on developing independent living skills and staff generally link this appropriately to each learner's planned destination. For example, this term's topic covers important aspects of managing a home.

The college provides a range of engaging community-based activities to develop learners' independent living skills, such as 'buddies on the go' work experience where learners sell a range of snacks across the business park where the college is based. However, overall, the layout of college learning areas hinders learners' ability to develop their independence.

R3. Strengthen the professional learning offer in relation to teaching including opportunities for staff to observe practice in other settings

Since the core inspection, professional learning opportunities for staff specifically relating to teaching have been limited.

The curriculum manager has participated in peer reviews of other settings, but this has not been reciprocated with a peer review at this campus. Tutors have received training in areas such as communication strategies, techniques to support learners to retain

information and tracking. One member of staff has visited another setting to look at their work developing enterprise and the learning from this visit is beginning to be utilised as a workshop is planned on site. Tutors visited another provision within the organisation, observing teaching in similar pathways.

However, no training has been provided that relate specifically to how staff might consider delivering the college's curriculum. Whilst progress has been made on the curriculum content there is insufficient focus on curriculum delivery.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website (<https://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

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

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