



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

**A report on**

**Coleg Plas Dwbl**

**Date of inspection: July 2024**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Coleg Plas Dwbl

Coleg Plas Dwbl, which is part of the Ruskin Mill Trust Group, opened in September 2011. It is a residential and day independent specialist college for young people with a range of learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum condition, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and social and emotional difficulties.

The college is situated on a farm at the base of the Preseli mountains in Pembrokeshire. The land consists of pasture, woodland and extensive gardens for horticulture.

There are currently 15 learners aged 16 to 25 years attending the college. Of these, around half of learners have residential placements, and around half attend as day learners. The majority of learners are placed by Welsh local authorities with a minority placed by local authorities in England. Around half of learners live in the college's residential houses situated locally.

The college bases its educational philosophy on the founding principles of the philosopher and scientist Rudolf Steiner, the polymath John Ruskin and the arts and crafts figure William Morris. It offers a Practical Skills Therapeutic Education (PSTE), which gives learners the opportunity to learn through real-life activities. These activities include a wide range of practical sessions in the forge, the farm, craft workshop and the kitchen.

The college principal has been in post since March 2023, he is supported by a deputy principal and additional learning needs co-ordinator. The leadership team is supported by seven tutors, around 14 support staff, an occupational therapist and speech and language therapist. The last full inspection of the college was in 2023.

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

## Main findings

### Strengths

The college provides a calm and purposeful community for learners. Staff understand their learners' needs extremely well. They build strong working relationships built on respect.

Nearly all staff across the college work highly collaboratively and in the best interests of learners, focusing on their future destinations. They have a shared vision for learner progress across a wide range of well-being and skill areas.

Ruskin Mill Trust has made significant investment in the college. This has enabled leaders to improve the premises and resources, as well as ensuring that the college has appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

During their time at the college nearly all learners make secure progress in their learning. For example, through the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education (PSTE) they work with increasing independence to make high quality items such as metal hanging baskets, willow-weaved fences and wooden coat racks.

Most learners across the college are confident young adults. They are proud to show visitors the vegetables they have harvested in the horticulture area or talk about their progress in gaining accreditations. Additionally, around half of learners reflect on their success in external work experience placements, for example at local heritage sites or in a health food shop.

There is a strong focus on learner voice at the college. For example, learners participate fully in student council meetings, influencing changes to timetables, menus and college activities. They collaborate purposefully with their peers and show each other respect. Nearly all learners are proud to be members of the college.

Since the time of the core inspection leaders have continued to provide stability, support and challenge to the work of the college. They continue to make positive changes and are beginning to develop beneficial relationships with external partners to further improve college provision and outcomes.

### Areas for development

Since the time of the core inspection the college has made secure improvements in arrangements to meet the communication needs of learners. However, many of these changes are recently implemented.

## Recommendations

### The college should:

R1 Consolidate progress toward embedding communication strategies for learners across the college

## Progress in addressing recommendations from previous visit or inspection report

### **R1. Consolidate the recent progress against the recommendations from the monitoring visit of February 2022**

Since the time of the core inspection, leaders have continued to sustain improvements made since the 2022 monitoring visit.

For example, the oversight from the director of colleges has been strengthened. Regular quality assurance visits to the college support him to develop a strong understanding of college provision and provide support and challenge to leaders.

The principal and deputy principal have developed a robust self-evaluation and quality improvement process and have a track record of sustaining important improvements. Further, they reflect on these improvements and seek to strengthen provision for all learners. For example, developing accessible learner policies and questionnaires.

The college has established a therapeutic team to provide specialist support to learners, including speech and language and occupational therapy.

### **R2. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment**

Since the last visit, there has been secure progress in improving the quality of teaching and assessment across the college.

Overall, tutors plan engaging sessions, which meet the needs of learners effectively and enable them to make progress in the development of skills and on accredited courses.

The college collects a wide range of data on learners' progress against their targets, reviewed on a six weekly basis. As a result, tutors analyse the progress of individual learners from one term to the next and over an extended period of time, aiding in producing a comprehensive review of learners' achievements and identifying where additional intervention and support may be required.

Learners are actively involved in reviewing their learning through self-assessment checklists at the end of each session and are proud to share their learning with visitors.

### **R3. Improve the use of communication strategies to meet the needs of all learners across the college**

The college has effectively improved the use of communication strategies to meet the needs of all learners. This is in the early stages of implementation.

The use of communication toolkits and visual cues ensure that learners are prepared for events and activities, for example preparing learners going on work experience as fruit pickers.

The college provides useful professional learning opportunities for staff on communication strategies, which are further supported by advice and guidance provided by onsite therapists. Additionally, the use of 'spotlight sessions', which are led by a learner's link worker, further strengthen staff understanding across the college on communication strategies to work with individual learners to meet their needs.

## 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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