

# Quality and Standards in Post-16 Education and Training in Wales

## A Report on the Quality of Further Education

in

**Swansea College**

**March 2006**

by

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



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales



**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL.  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**

**The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:**

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ LEAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

**© Crown Copyright 2006: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document/publication specified.**

## Introduction

Swansea College was inspected as part of a six-year (2004–2010) national programme of inspections of all post-16 providers in Wales. The purpose of the programme is to identify good features and shortcomings in order that the college may improve the quality of education and training offered and raise the standards achieved by learners. Inspection is also designed to give learners more information about the quality of providers of further education.

All inspections conducted under the new arrangements apply the following principles:

- the use of a common framework which is common to all sectors of education and training in Wales;
- an emphasis on the college's evaluation of its work;
- the involvement of a provider nominee who worked with the inspection team; and
- the inspection of a sample of provision.

The inspection took place from 20 to 30 March 2006. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the Welsh Assembly Government, undertook the inspection. The team included peer assessors released from other further education providers in Wales.

The team was required to report on standards achieved by learners, the quality of education and training provided, the quality of leadership and management and to judge if the college provides value for money.

### Grade descriptors

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

The Learning and Skills Act 2000, requires the college to prepare a written statement of the action that it proposes to take to address the recommendations in the inspection report and the timescales for completing the proposed actions.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>7</b>
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	7
<b>The quality of education and training</b>	<b>9</b>
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	9
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	10
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	12
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>15</b>
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	15
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	16
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	18
<b>Standards achieved by learners in learning areas inspected</b>	<b>21</b>
Science and Mathematics	21
Hair and Beauty	22
Hospitality and Catering	23
Art and Design	25
History, Philosophy and Theology	26
Social Sciences	27
Languages, Literature and Culture	28
Independent Living Skills	29
<b>Provider's response to the report findings</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b> The evidence base of the inspection	
<b>Appendix 2</b> The inspection team	

## Context

### **The nature of the provider**

- 1 Swansea College is one of the largest further education colleges in Wales, with over 13,500 learners enrolled in 2004-2005. It offers a comprehensive range of provision from entry level to level four courses across all learning areas. In 2004-2005 it had approximately 2,000 full-time and 10,000 part-time learners.
- 2 The college is situated in the west of Swansea and serves an area with a population of 230,000. It operates from three main campuses in Swansea, at Tycoch, Llwyn-y-Bryn and Sketty Hall. It has four major outreach centres in the Swansea area, at Kingsway, Morrision, the Business College and Cefn Hengoed.
- 3 The college also provides extensive community and adult provision on a large number of sites in the city. It also offers provision for work-based learning.
- 4 The college's mission is to '.....achieve excellence by providing innovative education and training that enables individuals and communities to realise their economic and social potential'. It has identified 10 values that support the mission and focus strongly on the learner, equality of opportunity, communication and Welsh language and culture. The college has placed the achievement of excellence at the heart of its values.
- 5 The college is a major partner in all strategic activities relating to education and training in the City and County of Swansea. It considers partnership working and collaboration as fundamental to its work, and to addressing its priorities.

## Summary

- 6 The profile of inspection grades awarded to the college is very good overall. All of the grades awarded for the common inspection framework's generic key questions have been improved or maintained from the last inspection in 2002. No learning area inspected is below the quality threshold of a grade 3.

### Table of grades awarded

The inspection team judged the college's work as follows:

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	2
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	3
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

- 7 Overall, in over three quarters of the classes observed learners' achievement and attainment was good or very good.

Learners' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	34%	43%	19%	3%	0%

- 8 The standards achieved in each of the learning areas inspected are as follows:

Learning area inspected	Inspection Grade
Science and Mathematics	3
Hair and Beauty	1
Hospitality and Catering	1
Art and Design	2
History, Philosophy and Theology	3
Social Sciences	3
Languages, Literature and Culture	2
Independent Living Skills	1

## Standards

- 9 Overall, across all qualification levels learners complete their courses at a good rate, and often at a higher rate than the national average for further education colleges in Wales. The college's unverified data for 2004-2005 generally shows an improvement in learners' completion of their courses from previous years. Learners' attainment of their qualifications is generally good or very good and the data also shows an improvement from previous years. Learners' attainment of key skills is satisfactory and the data shows an improvement from previous years.

### The quality of education and training

The quality of teaching in the learning areas inspected	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	27%	53%	19%	1%	0%

- 10 The quality of teaching, training and assessment is mostly good or very good. Generally teachers plan lessons carefully and share lesson objectives with learners. They use a wide and appropriate range of teaching strategies to engage learners. Teachers generally use good questioning techniques so that all learners are involved. Teachers make good use of information communications technology to support teaching and learning, including interactive whiteboards and the internet.
- 11 Learners' work is assessed regularly by teachers. They give good feedback to learners to help them improve the standard of their work.
- 12 The senior managers plan the curriculum very well. There is a good and broad range of full-time and part-time courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. Curriculum managers at all levels use local and national information effectively to help inform their strategic planning and curriculum development.
- 13 The college offers a good range of community courses in a number of learning areas, for example, Information Technology, Art and Design and languages. These help to address the widening participation agenda.
- 14 All full-time learners have timetabled tutorials. In many cases the development of their key and basic skills is integrated effectively into their main courses. Work experience is an integral part of the college's vocational courses. However, few learners studying A and AS level courses choose to undertake work experience as part of their courses. Learners have good opportunities to develop personal, social, moral, cultural and spiritual values. The curriculum has a number of innovative features. These include the International Baccalaureate and Welsh Baccalaureate qualifications.
- 15 The college works well with local partners, including schools, the local education authority, the community consortium for education and training, and employers.
- 16 All learners have outstanding care, support and guidance from their teachers. Staff work hard to identify and break down learners' barriers to learning and plan new support initiatives carefully. Learners with additional learning needs, including those

with dyslexia, have effective support from staff. The college measures the 'distance travelled' by learners who receive support. Many learners who enter college at entry level leave with a range of higher qualifications at levels 1, 2 or 3.

- 17 The college provides careers guidance. It has effective partnerships with Careers Wales West and has recently gained the Careers Education and Guidance Quality Award.
- 18 The college is highly committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. It has clear action plans to address these issues. Learners benefit from their involvement in a wide range of activities designed to raise awareness of issues relating to equality of opportunity.

### **The quality of leadership and management**

- 19 The college places learners at the centre of its work. The management style and culture within the college is open, inclusive and consultative. Senior managers consult extensively with stakeholders and take good account of national and local priorities when developing their plans.
- 20 The relatively new structure, and responsibilities, of the executive team are appropriate to the needs of the college. The structure focuses very well on learners and learning. However, there is too much variation in the workload of different post holders. Some managers line manage too many staff.
- 21 The college's procedures for performance management have many good features. Systems are good and clear. Staff have good and effective training. The programme of planned classroom observations is good and helps teachers to improve their practice. However, the quality of objective setting for staff is too variable.
- 22 The college has established good systems of communication. There is a regular schedule of management meetings. However, the terms of reference of some of the meetings are not clear, and lines of accountability for decision making are not always clear enough.
- 23 The governing body carries out its role very effectively. Governors' have a good range of expertise. They are linked to faculties or functional areas within the college and are very knowledgeable about the work of the college. They challenge senior managers while supporting their work.
- 24 The college has a clear, well-established system for improving quality and standards. Procedures to assist in the improvement of quality include the use of advanced practitioners and accredited classroom assessors. Where quality procedures and practices have been fully adopted standards have improved or been maintained. Course teams generally use data well to measure learners' performance.
- 25 Occasionally managers do not have up-to-date learner management information so they find it difficult to make timely decisions or plans for course changes. The college makes good use of learners' views to improve the quality of provision. It has a clear and effective system for handling complaints.

- 26 The college's self-assessment process is sound. In most faculties it is thorough and inclusive. The results of the college's self-assessment are a close match to the findings of the Estyn inspection team. The college has addressed most recommendations from the last inspection. However, college systems to measure the distance travelled by learners are not developed enough.
- 27 The college has a very effective human resource strategy. It has a strong focus on good employment relations and the continuing development of its staff. It has comprehensive employment policies ranging from statutory requirements through to policies focusing on staff health and well-being.
- 28 The college is fully committed to developing its staff. They benefit from an extensive in-house development and training programme. The college's staff development plan and records are detailed. Staff in leadership and management roles take part in an internal management development programme which improves their management skills. The college makes very good use of resources to deliver its staff training programme. The college places a high priority on providing staff training that supports the improvement of teaching and learning. This includes the continuous development and use of information learning technology. Learners and teachers make very good and innovative use of virtual learning environment materials. The quality of learning resources is good or very good. Accommodation is of a good standard and quality.
- 29 Overall, the college provides very good value for money. It uses its resources effectively to provide learners with very good support, learning resources and facilities. The majority of learners have a very positive and valuable learning experience.

## Recommendations

- 30 In order to improve, the college's staff and governing body need to:
- R1 make sure that teachers consistently challenge learners to produce work of a high standard in all subjects;
  - R2 systematically collect and use value-added data so that learners' performance, and their distance travelled in the college can be measured and improved, particularly on level three courses;
  - R3 review the roles and responsibilities of faculty managers and staff to make sure that they have an appropriate workload;
  - R4 make sure that college quality improvement procedures are consistently applied across all learning areas and faculties;
  - R5 make sure that accurate learner and course data is collected regularly and is used routinely to monitor performance against targets;
  - R6 improve systems of communication and accountability so that the quality of experience of all learners is improved;
  - R7 improve action planning and monitoring so that they are consistently good across the college; and
  - R8 share good practice within the college in the delivery of individual and group tutorials, and the setting of challenging learner targets.

## Standards

### Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

#### Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

31 The findings of the inspection team are close to the judgements made by the college in its self-evaluation report. The inspection grades awarded to half of the eight learning areas were the same as those in the self-evaluation report with one learning area graded higher. The remaining three learning areas were one grade lower than those in the self-evaluation report.

32 Overall, in over three-quarters of the classes observed learners' achievement and attainment was good or very good.

Learners' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	34%	43%	19%	3%	0%

33 The standards achieved in each of the learning areas inspected are as follows:

Learning area inspected	Inspection grade
Science and Mathematics	3
Hair and Beauty	1
Hospitality and Catering	1
Art and Design	2
History, Philosophy and Theology	3
Social Sciences	3
Languages, Literature and Culture	2
Independent Living Skills	1

34 Learners' standards in Science and Mathematics, History, Philosophy and Theology and Social Sciences are satisfactory overall. Within these learning areas, learners on the International Baccalaureate and geography courses achieve very good standards.

35 In Science and Mathematics and history not enough learners achieve high grades at A level.

36 Many learners' attainment of key skills is satisfactory and is generally improving.

37 Many learners on most courses make good progress overall. The progress and distance travelled by learners in learning areas awarded grade 1 is often outstanding.

38 All learners develop good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Most apply their knowledge effectively to their studies. However, learners in Science and Mathematics, and English do not extend their learning enough outside the classroom.

- 39 Most learners make good to very good use of information learning technology to support their work.
- 40 The majority of learners develop good communication skills. Their files are mostly well-presented. The standards of their oral work are good to very good. All learners know how well they are doing, and most know what to do to improve their work. Many learners gain good research and learning skills.
- 41 Most learners work well independently and with others. Most develop good skills to help them work with others and improve their learning. Learners behave well and all show a high level of respect for each other. They develop personally and show confidence in their ability to succeed in their studies. Most learners are punctual and attend well. However, in psychology punctuality and attendance are sometimes poor.

## The quality of education and training

### Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

#### Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

- 42 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the college in the self-evaluation report. Over three-quarters of the lessons observed during the inspection were graded as good or very good.

The quality of teaching in the learning areas inspected	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	27%	53%	19%	1%	0%

- 43 Overall the quality of teaching, training and assessment varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Inspectors observed outstanding lessons in all of the learning areas inspected.
- 44 All teachers generally plan lessons well and most lessons are well structured. They use a range of teaching strategies to engage the learners, including group work and discussions. Many teachers make very good use of information learning technology to support their teaching and learners' learning. In Hair and Beauty and modern foreign languages all teachers challenge learners well to achieve high standards. In Science and Mathematics some teachers do not differentiate work enough for learners with varying abilities.
- 45 Teachers effectively identify opportunities to develop key skills in lesson plans. In many learning areas the development and assessment of learners' key skills are integrated well with their main qualification. However, in Science and Mathematics teachers miss opportunities to develop learners' key skills.
- 46 Overall teachers and learners work very well together. Most teachers generally use questioning and additional activities very well to engage and challenge learners. However, in a few instances in Science and Mathematics teachers do not challenge learners enough and do not have high enough expectations of them.
- 47 Generally teachers give learners a high level of support. They assess their progress and achievement regularly. Teachers give learners good oral feedback and they mark their work regularly. In the main teachers' written feedback is detailed and constructive. Assessment tasks are generally appropriate. However, in Science and Mathematics teachers rely too much on past paper questions to assess learners' progress.

**Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?**

**Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings**

- 48 The senior management team plans the curriculum well. Managers regularly review a wide range of reports from the Welsh Assembly Government and other organisations such as the Sector Skills Councils and Jobcentre Plus. They use this information effectively to inform their strategic planning and curriculum development.
- 49 The college offers a good and broad range of part-time and full-time vocational and academic courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. A minority of A level classes and the year 2 International Baccalaureate (IB) classes are small. The college offers these courses to extend learners' choice, and in the case of the IB to offer provision that is not available elsewhere in the locality. Senior managers manage the curriculum well so that it can subsidise these courses through more profitable provision available in the college.
- 50 Full-time courses have timetabled tutorial sessions. These provide learners with useful knowledge and skills. In one faculty, A level Arts, tutorials do not always fully address the personal development needs of AS and A level learners.
- 51 All full-time learners and most part-time learners take key skills courses as part of the college's essential skills strategy. Over the last few years learners' attainment of key skills has improved, particularly in application of number and communication. Overall, the college provides good opportunities for learners to develop the key skills of working with others; problem solving and managing own learning.
- 52 In many cases learners' development of key and basic skills is integrated effectively into the work that learners undertake in their main courses, for example in Independent Living Skills and Hair and Beauty. However, in mathematics and science, learners study key skills separately. These key skills sessions do not always take enough account of work that learners cover in their main subjects.
- 53 Learners have good opportunities to develop personal, social, moral, cultural and spiritual values. The promotion of Welsh culture and language is one of the college's strategic aims. There is a Welsh language scheme with appropriate objectives. A team of Welsh champions work across the college faculties to promote Welsh culture through a series of cross-college events. This initiative is starting to have a positive effect on learners' experiences, although it is too early to fully evaluate its impact.
- 54 The college delivers Welsh language courses on its main site and at community centres. Satisfactory progress has been made in increasing learners' opportunities to take part in bilingual teaching and learning. Learners who study part-time can undertake bilingual catering courses. Learners can also be assessed through the medium of Welsh in Hair and Beauty. Full-time learners can have Welsh medium tutorials. At the time of the inspection no learners were taking advantage of this opportunity.

- 55 Work experience is an integral part of most vocational course. However, in mainly AS and A level courses learners, take up of work experience is low overall.
- 56 The college curriculum has a number of innovative features. These include courses in the IB qualification and the Welsh Bacculaureate qualification. Both the IB and Welsh Bacculaureate provide good opportunities for learners to take part in additional out of hours and off-site provision, such as study visits and conferences. The IB provides very good opportunities for learners to work with students from other European countries.

#### **Good curriculum practice in delivery of the IB programme**

As part of the IB programme, the college takes part in an annual Global Citizenship Youth Development Forum. Learners, including those visiting from Russia, Germany, Sweden and Holland, take part in Youth Parliament activities where they consider the theme of globalisation.

Learners meet in a hall to engage in a practical task to illustrate global inequalities of wealth. Different parts of the hall are signposted to identify the continents. There are 30 chairs in the hall. Each chair represents a unit of world wealth. The 50 students are asked to divide the 30 chairs and locate them in the hall next to a continent. Europe and North America for example have many chairs, whilst Africa and South America have only a few. The 50 students are then divided and dispersed to reflect the world's population by continent.

In Europe and North America there are a number of spare chairs for the students whilst in Africa and South America most of the students are left standing without a chair.

The discussion following covers issues of poverty and the distribution of wealth, inequalities in world trade, multi-national competition, population control and migration.

This exercise promotes team working, develops learners' very good knowledge and understanding about development issues, and provides a very good forum for discussion on globalization issues. Learners' work is of high quality overall.

- 57 The college is in the third year of piloting the Welsh Bacculaureate qualification at both levels 2 and 3. Learners are introduced to contemporary social, political and economic issues in the study of Wales, Europe and the World. The college has strategies in place to embed entrepreneurship within the Welsh Bacculaureate curriculum, but this is less strong in other courses. Learners on the Welsh Bacculaureate are not always clear about the course content and assessment. Few of the level 2 learners have gained the qualification to date.
- 58 The college offers a good range of courses within the community in order to address the widening participation and inclusion of learners. These include courses for the unemployed, learners with moderate and severe learning difficulties and disabilities, and those with mental health difficulties.

- 59 The college works very well with partners to develop a good range of basic skills courses in the community. The college is a Learndirect centre and promotes open and distance learning well. There are over 1000 learners enrolled on a large number of Learndirect programmes.
- 60 The college has developed strong local partnerships with a range of providers. These include partner schools, the local education authority, the local community consortium for education and training, support agencies, employers and community groups. Effective links with employers lead to the planning and provision of customised training courses and qualification routes.
- 61 The college has good links with schools. It offers a wide range of taster courses. Over 400 pupils in the 14-16 age range attend a variety of vocational programmes at the college and attain unit qualifications. The pre-modern apprenticeship programme is influential in informing national developments within the 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative. Other strategies to use credit based qualifications in response to the 14-19 initiative are at an early stage of development. The college is making good progress overall in addressing issues of sustainability.
- 62 There is a good link between the college's Business College and employers. The college has increased the amount of work-based learning provision that it offers in recent years. The Business College has developed a wide range of qualification routes to address the needs of local employers. The college is a lead partner on contracts for Jobcentre Plus and work-based learning.
- 63 The college has a growing intake of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. It is making very good progress in addressing issues of diversity. There is a Race Equality Action Plan in place and many staff are fully engaged in interesting and effective activities to promote issues of multiculturalism within the curriculum.

**Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?**

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
--

- 64 All the college staff are committed to providing learners with high quality care, guidance and support. The ethos is one where learners feel valued and supported in an inclusive environment. There is a wide range of suitable policies and procedures, all of which are on the college intranet. Rigorous monitoring systems make sure that policies and procedures are implemented.
- 65 Managers plan and manage support for learners very effectively. They work hard to identify barriers that could prevent learners from achieving their potential and to make sure that learners can access a wide range of support services. Managers plan new support initiatives carefully and evaluate them before deciding to extend their use across the college.
- 66 Prospective learners use attractive bilingual publications and information on the college's website to help them choose the most suitable course. The college is currently piloting an interactive on-line course that will also help learners make the right choice.

- 67 The Student Learning Services based in the main college campus provides learners with a welcoming 'one-stop shop' for support, guidance and other services, such as counselling. The full range of advice and guidance services is also available for learners based at the Llwyn-y-Bryn campus.
- 68 A freephone advice line enables learners to notify the college of their absence and to contact specialist advice and guidance staff. The advice line also serves as a call centre for enquiries from the public. College staff analyse all incoming calls carefully to identify the number of calls made to each service. This analysis also helps managers to allocate enough staff at peak times and to identify which of the college's marketing strategies have been particularly effective.
- 69 Trained advice and guidance specialists provide potential learners with impartial pre-entry guidance. However, some learners on A and AS level courses are working at an inappropriate level. Entry interviews also take account of learners' support needs. Where learners need additional support, advisers work with the Disability Officer to meet their specific needs. College staff monitor recruitment trends carefully.
- 70 The college has developed extensive and effective partnerships with local schools. These links enable college staff to provide pupils with a range of relevant support and guidance activities which help them to make informed choices at 16. Initial entry interviews take place in schools. These help learners to feel more comfortable during the first part of the admissions process.
- 71 All full-time learners benefit from a comprehensive induction to the college and to their learning programme. Learners in many learning areas take part in team building activities which help them settle into their course quickly and to bond with their peers. All learners also receive a useful handbook which summarises important college information.
- 72 The college has the Basic Skills Agency Post-16 Quality Mark for basic skills support. At enrolment or earlier, all full-time learners undertake on-line diagnostic assessments of their literacy and numeracy skills. The college's essential skills team work closely with teachers to plan suitable support.
- 73 Full-time learners have good quality in-class support when there are a number of learners in the group who have been identified with poor basic skills. In other cases, learners benefit from individual support.
- 74 Part-time learners, who attend for more than five hours each week, are screened for basic skills needs and receive suitable support. Almost all learners take up the support offered by college staff. They have good access to a comprehensive range of basic and key skills support materials on the college virtual learning environment.
- 75 All full-time learners are screened to identify if they are dyslexic and they receive appropriate specialist support. These learners also have suitable learning resources, such as laptops and voice recognition software. Learners from abroad benefit from the support of staff in a dedicated support unit and from their attendance at courses to improve their English language skills.

- 76 An innovative European Social Fund project, Employment Pathways, provides learners with other effective support mechanisms, including trained learner peer mentors.
- 77 Senior managers measures the 'distance travelled' by learners who receive support. Case studies show that learners assessed at entry level on entry to the college often leave with a range of vocational qualifications and/or key skills at levels 1, 2 or 3.
- 78 In most cases, individual tutorials are effective and help learners to progress in their studies. However, in some learning areas, the targets set in tutorials are not specific enough and lack challenge. Senior tutors, specialist personal tutors and student and learning services staff are liaising effectively to improve the tutorial programme.
- 79 The Sports, Lifestyle and Business Faculty is piloting a student information database to track individual learner performance more effectively. A tutorial support officer regularly loads information into the comprehensive database. This significantly reduces the administrative burden for teachers and enables them to focus on teaching and learning.
- 80 The college provides good careers guidance. A new tracking system, designed to monitor careers provision, identifies the take up of the group and individual careers support. There are very effective partnership arrangements between the college and Careers Wales West. The college has recently gained the Careers Education and Guidance Quality Award in recognition of the quality of this service.
- 81 There are suitable policies in place for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The college has designated members of staff who are responsible for dealing with related issues. A college governor also takes a special interest in this important area.

#### **Outstanding practice in the promotion of equality and diversity**

The college is highly committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. There are clear action plans in place to address these issues. Learners' social awareness benefits from their involvement in well-attended activities such as the diversity fayre, Black history month and a Holocaust memorial day. 'Job swap' activities are used to challenge gender stereotyping. For example, learners in hairdressing and beauty therapy exchanged roles with learners in electronics. Both groups gained a greater understanding of the work involved. The college's harmony, equity and respect officers provide good support to staff who are involved in bullying and harassment issues to ensure that learners' receive the most appropriate help and advice

- 82 Learners receive good welfare support at the college. However, the college does not have a health and well-being programme to raise learners' awareness of sexual and mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse.

## Leadership and management

### Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 83 The college has a clear mission and values. Staff and learners are very well aware of these and the college's strategic aims, which place learners at the centre of the work. The management style and culture within the college is open, inclusive and consultative.
- 84 The college has appropriate strategic aims. Senior managers review these regularly following good and widespread consultations with stakeholders. These include employers and representatives of a very wide range of community groups. They take good account of the local economic context and the developing needs of the Swansea area when formulating their plans. The strategic planning cycle is clear and senior managers include the findings of their consultations in discussions with the college governors.
- 85 Following the appointment of the principal in 2003 the management and faculty structure was revised. The structure and responsibilities of the executive team are appropriate to the needs of the college. The executive team is made up of the principal, a deputy principal with responsibility for curriculum, planning and students, and three assistant principals responsible for quality and systems; finance and resources; and business development and marketing. Four directors of faculty, and the two directors for student and learning services and information learning technology services report to the deputy principal.
- 86 Each faculty has a director, an assistant director, a senior tutor and a faculty administrator. Each faculty also has between six and nine curriculum team leaders. They are responsible for leading a team of teachers in managing the curriculum.
- 87 The structure focuses very well on learners and learning. Many aspects are working well. However, there is too much variation in the workload of different post holders. Assistant directors of faculty line manage far too many teachers. Curriculum team leaders are not line managers. In practice however, they carry out some aspects of line management roles. Directors of faculty also work with assistant directors of faculty in their line management role. There is too much variation in practice across the faculties.
- 88 The procedures for performance management have many good features. These include good and clear systems, and the training that staff receive. A well-trained team of assessors carry out graded classroom observations on all teachers. Teachers are observed again if the grade awarded is grade 3 or below. Assessors carry out observations to a planned timetable, but this does not always match the programme of review meetings carried out by the assistant directors of faculty. The quality of objective setting in performance reviews is too variable.

- 89 There are good systems of communication in place. These include regular monthly briefings to staff on all college sites. These briefings cover a wide range of interesting and relevant topics in order to keep staff informed about the issues pertinent to the work of the college. The most recent briefing focussed on preparing for inspection. The principal also has a weekly surgery for learners to discuss college issues.
- 90 There is a regular schedule of management meetings. However, the terms of reference and reporting lines of several of the meetings are not clear. The executive team meets weekly, as does the senior management team. Some meetings are designated for strategic decision making, others deal with operational matters and others are of an informal nature. Because of this lines of accountability for decision making are not always clear enough.
- 91 The governing body of the college carries out its role very effectively. There is an appropriate range of sub-committees which carry out their role well. The governing board has a good range of experience and the search and nominations committee regularly reviews its composition when vacancies occur.
- 92 Governors are linked with either a faculty or functional area in the college. This provides them with a useful insight into the detailed work of particular areas. The student governor makes valuable contributions to the work of the board, for example he recently made a presentation to the board on the Foster report on the future of further education in England.
- 93 Governors are very knowledgeable about the work of the college and the challenges and opportunities facing it in the future. They challenge the senior managers of the college while being very supportive of the work that they are doing in driving up standards. The governing body sets good and appropriate targets for the college. The governors monitor the achievement of these targets closely.

**Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?**

**Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

- 94 The college has a clear, well-established system for improving quality and standards. However, it is too soon to fully evaluate the effectiveness of these new practices. In learning areas and faculties where college managers at all levels make good and consistent use of the college's quality systems, standards have improved or been maintained since the last inspection.
- 95 However, quality initiatives are not yet having a full and effective impact across all college faculties. For example, in the faculty, A level and the Arts, two learning area grades dropped by a grade.
- 96 Course leaders regularly complete course reviews. Most reviews are thorough and evaluative. Many learning areas produce highly evaluative reports that lead to specific action and measurable improvement, for example in Hospitality and Catering. However, in A level and the Arts, the quality of the reviews varies too much, and a minority are superficial.

- 97 Managers receive regular reports on learners' attendance, completion and attainment rates. Course teams generally use this data well to benchmark and measure performance against national comparators. However, in some instances this data is not used well enough to inform decisions and to plan for improvement. The college does not compare internal performance of similar courses enough.
- 98 Teams meet regularly to discuss quality and other issues. However, in a minority of cases, in a few learning areas and meeting groups, minutes of meetings and subsequent action plans are not detailed enough. They do not always identify and record measurable targets for course and college improvement. The monitoring of action plans by teams is not sufficiently robust in all areas. Target setting is not used consistently well to measure, and impact on, improvement.
- 99 Course files are detailed and follow a common format. The college's quality unit regularly audits the files and systems. However, in a few instances managers do not focus enough on monitoring the quality of the documents, such as the quality of course planning, and they do not always advise on how the quality of the documents can be improved. In a few cases, course file information is not used effectively enough to drive consistent course and quality improvement.
- 100 The college carries out an annual internal inspection of a specific curriculum area, targeted to meet strategic needs. The process has led to improvements in a number of courses.
- 101 Occasionally managers do not have up-to-date student management information data. This means that they do not always make timely decisions or plans for course management. The college records and uses information on learners' attainment of modules and additional qualifications. However, not all learning areas analyse this information systematically to plan effectively for improvement.
- 102 The college makes good use of learners' views as a tool to improve quality. A wide range of methods are used to gather information and to find out what learners think of their experiences in the college. These include questionnaires, focus groups, the principal's 'surgery' and the use of information technology. The quality unit makes very good use of this feedback to improve services in the college. It informs relevant staff of the findings so that they can identify appropriate action. It also informs learners about action that it has taken in response to comments. It has recently introduced an internal 'customer care' questionnaire so that staff can comment formally on aspects of the college.
- 103 The college has a clear, well publicised system for handling complaints. These are analysed and responded to effectively.
- 104 Most recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed. The college has started to measure the distance travelled by learners while they are at the college. The individual student tracking record is starting to be used to track learners' progress in some learning areas and faculties. However, the college's value-added measure of individual learner progress is still not used enough.

- 105 The self-assessment process is sound. All staff spoken to during the inspection had contributed to the process in varying degrees. In most faculties and learning areas the process is thorough and inclusive. The results of the self-assessment are a fairly good match to the findings of the inspection team.

**Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?**

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
--

- 106 The college has a very effective human resource strategy that includes clear and detailed recruitment and selection procedures. It has a very strong focus on good employment relations, and the continuing development of staff. The college's staff development policy is clear and comprehensive and links clearly to the college's aims and objectives. Staff benefit from an extensive in-house development and training programme.
- 107 New staff have an effective induction to the college and their job roles during their probationary period. Personal mentors support them very well. Staff have very effective support from the college's continuing professional development team during their probation.
- 108 All staff have an equal opportunity to take part in development and training activities. Several processes, including faculty and departmental training needs assessment, and individual reviews inform the college's staff development plan. Staff in leadership and management roles take part in an internal management development programme. The college makes very good use of resources to deliver its staff development training programme.
- 109 The college has comprehensive employment policies. These range from statutory requirements through to policies focussing on staff health and well-being. Diversity and equality of opportunity policies are effective. Senior managers' regular monitoring and analysis of management statistics makes sure that college policies are consistently implemented.
- 110 Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience. The proportion of teachers with a teaching qualification is higher than the average for further education colleges in Wales. The college has an appropriate balance of full-time and part-time staff to deliver the range of programmes that it offers. Technical and administrative support for teaching staff and faculty managers is very good. Faculty administrative officers remove many administrative tasks from curriculum leaders and academic staff allowing them to concentrate on learners.
- 111 The college places a high priority on improving teaching and learning across all areas of the curriculum. Advanced practitioners support teachers' classroom development. They work with new and experienced teachers to improve their practice and to raise standards in the classroom and to improve the experience of learners. This relatively new initiative is already starting to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning in most learning areas.

- 112 The college is implementing its Welsh language scheme. It has recruited bilingual staff and is developing the bilingual skills of existing members of staff. There are systems in place to determine which job roles require bilingual skills.
- 113 The college is in the process of producing a staff skills database that gives an up-to-date record of staff qualifications, skills and continuing professional development. This will enable the college to deploy staff even more effectively.
- 114 A minority of classes are small, with seven or eight learners, but the college manages the curriculum well so that it can subsidise these small courses through more profitable college provision.
- 115 The quality and range of learning resources is generally good or very good across all learning areas inspected. Learning resource needs are identified annually by faculties. The learning resource centre on the main site is welcoming and is well used by learners. It has a good range of books and other paper based resources. The learning resource centre is part of a local initiative with other local authority, university and college libraries to encourage greater public use of the facilities under the 'Open to All' initiative.
- 116 Learning resource staff work very well with learners. They seek their views through surveys, focus groups and suggestion schemes. The centre promotes learners' work, and helps to raise learners' personal, social and cultural awareness.
- 117 All learners have very good access to electronic materials in the centre. These include a wide range of high quality on-line materials that have been developed by staff. Off-site learners in particular, benefit from these materials. The centre has facilitators who have both teaching and information learning technology qualifications or skills. They link closely with faculties to provide support for learners.
- 118 The college places a high priority on the continuous development and use of information learning technology. It has a comprehensive strategy to support this aim. Learners and teachers make very good and innovative use of virtual learning environment materials. All teachers have had training so that they can produce and use on-line learning and assessment materials. Over 90% of teaching rooms have interactive whiteboards. Teachers use these increasingly to engage learners in interactive learning. Information learning technology champions support staff and learners very well to use information learning technology more effectively.
- 119 All learners have access to over 1000 networked computers, and additional laptops are available. Learner access to the network is user-friendly. The college is putting in place wireless network, and is currently developing the concept of the mobile classroom in order to make efficient use of available room space.
- 120 The college has a high proportion of good quality well maintained accommodation that is attractive and inviting to learners. A recently formed accommodation group analyses space utilisation data, and recommends changes in line with curriculum requirements. The college is currently updating its estates strategy in line with national and local agendas, and the changing needs of the curriculum.

- 121 The college has responded well to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Access within the college is good. College health and safety policies are good.
- 122 The college is in a strong financial position. The college's reliance on core funding is lower than the Welsh sector average, and is a measure of increased diversification. It invests and allocates its financial resources in line with its strategic priorities. Budgets are devolved to faculty or department cost centres. Detailed course costing enables the college to make informed decisions.
- 123 Overall, the college provides very good value for money. It uses its resources very effectively to provide learners with good support, learning resources and facilities. The majority of learners have a very positive and valuable experience when they attend the college.
- 124 Most grades awarded to learning areas during the inspection are either good or very good. The majority of learners in the learning areas inspected are enrolled in either grade 1 or grade 2 areas. Over all the learning areas in the college, the majority of learners are enrolled in grade 1 or 2 provision. All of the Estyn grades awarded to learning areas at the college are at or above the quality threshold.

## Standards achieved by learners in learning areas inspected

### Science and Mathematics

#### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

- 125 The college provides A and AS levels in applied science, chemistry, biology, psychology, mathematics and physics for full-time learners. Full-time and part-time learners can also study GCSE mathematics. There is one evening class in GCSE human physiology and health.
- 126 Most learners are able to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding about the topic that they are studying. The standards of work observed are appropriate to the level of the class. Standards of practical work are generally good in biology and physics. In biology learners are good at drawing from microscope slides and follow instructions safely and competently. In physics they are able to carry out practical work accurately, and demonstrate good understanding of some difficult concepts.
- 127 In maths the standards of understanding and problem solving are good. In most subjects, learners make good use of information communications technology (ICT) in classes. Standards of practical work are too variable in chemistry. A few learners do not always understand the underpinning theory behind the practical work that they are doing.
- 128 Overall, there are positive results in attainment in most subjects with a trend of improvement over the last few years. In 2004-2005 there was a 100% pass rate in most subjects at A level. However the A-C pass rate is only adequate in chemistry, biology and psychology. A minority of learners do not make the progress at A level that would be expected from their GCSE results. In GCSE mathematics the rates of retention and attainment are poor for full-time learners but good for part-time learners. Retention is generally satisfactory in A level sciences and maths, but there is poor retention in A level psychology.
- 129 Most learners progress well and develop good knowledge. A few do not develop research and problem solving skills to a high A level standard in chemistry, biology and psychology. In the best examples, learners make good use of the internet, the college's virtual learning environment and other learning resources to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond what they are taught in class. However, many learners do not extend their learning enough outside the classroom.
- 130 In a minority of subjects, many learners are not always able to link work that they are doing in class to what they have done before. They do not have enough opportunities for extended written work to develop the skills of application and synthesis of their knowledge and understanding. In a mathematics workshop, learners have good opportunities to extend their understanding. In a fast track A level psychology class, learners' oral responses to searching questions demonstrate good analytical skills and the ability to elaborate evaluative points.

- 131 In a few subjects many learners do not complete all of the exercises that they are given to work on outside the class. They are not challenged enough, either to complete their work, or to redo work that was unsatisfactory.
- 132 In most classes learners attend regularly and punctually. However, in psychology punctuality and attendance is sometimes poor. All learners show a high level of respect for other learners and value the diverse ethnic mix of the class in which they are working.
- 133 The standards of work in learners' files are too variable in quality. In the best cases in all subjects, and particularly in mathematics and physics, learners organise their work well. In other subjects learners' files are less well organised and contain a mix of notes, homework and reports on experiments. This does not provide a secure basis for revision for learners who do not always have sound study skills.

### **Hair and Beauty**

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
--

- 134 The college provides full-time courses in hairdressing at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3, and beauty at levels 2 and 3. The college also offers a full-time holistic therapy course. Learners who are over 19 years of age can study hairdressing or beauty on one year fast-track courses. Part-time courses include make-up, manicure, waxing, reflexology, Indian head massage, body massage, and aromatherapy. The college's Broadway site offers all hair and beauty courses. The college delivers fast-track and level 3 hairdressing at Cefn Hengoed.
- 135 All learners work professionally in all disciplines. The standard of their practical work is very good. Their work in college salons reflects that in the industry. For example reception work, booking systems and the services offered to customers. Learners on levels 1 and 2 hairdressing courses and those on beauty courses have experience of working in industry. This gives them a realistic insight into their chosen career and extra practice in working at professional speeds and standards.
- 136 All learners on all full-time courses study additional qualifications that are relevant to their chosen occupation. These include customer service qualifications, and key skills, such as communication, information technology and improving own learning. These qualifications help them to progress into their chosen career. Learners studying holistic therapy also undertake a Diploma in Business Essentials. All learners appreciate the opportunities that they have to study these additional subjects. Mature learners especially, are proud of the progress that they have made in information technology.
- 137 Learners' attainment of their qualifications and completion of their courses are exceptionally good. The distance travelled by learners is outstanding. Many learners say that they had poor experiences in school and until attending college had made little progress in their learning. They are now enthusiastic and motivated. They are progressing well and discovering new learning skills. Many are successful for the first time. Mature learners are making excellent progress in what they see as a second chance to achieve a formal qualification. Their studies have given them a

new progression route and motivated them to discover and use new personal and professional skills.

- 138 As well as acquiring technical skills, learners also make very good progress with their theory work and develop good understanding and knowledge. They are able to transfer their skills and relate their learning to different practical situations. They analyse the services that they are offering and adapt them to suit individual client needs. They work exceptionally well when under pressure in the salons where they are required to solve a wide range of problems and make decisions independently. Learners' adapt well to the professional commercial environment and develop the ability to impress their clients and to sell services.
- 139 Most learners present themselves very well in their working environment. However, the appearance of a very small number of hairdressing learners is not professional enough when they are working in the salon. Learners in a few salon sessions are not sufficiently challenged if they do not have enough opportunities to work on live models.
- 140 In most classes learners' attendance and punctuality is good or very good. Teachers challenge lateness and absenteeism is dealt with effectively through the college system.
- 141 Learners have good relationships with teachers. They support each other well with their work through the "study buddy" system. They are proud of the progress that they have made. They develop good communication skills and self-confidence. They talk confidently with clients and tutors.
- 142 All students benefit from effective tutorials that cover pastoral and personal matters as well as their academic progress.

### **Hospitality and Catering**

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
--

- 143 The college provides a limited range of full-time Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) courses. These include the National Certificate in Hospitality Supervision, First Diploma in Hospitality and Introductory Diploma in Hospitality, Travel and Tourism. The college also has substantial work-based learning provision where learners at work choose from a wide range of programmes at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels 1, 2 and 3. The limited range of part-time provision includes a sugar craft course and a community-based Italian cookery course.
- 144 On all full-time courses, learners work well in practical classes, both independently and in teams, to prepare and serve food. They complete their work to good standards within agreed timescales. Learners have a good understanding of the importance of safe and hygienic practices and use equipment competently.
- 145 All learners participate well in class and respond well to questioning which tests their understanding. They share their experiences with one another and listen attentively

to the contribution of their peers. This usefully extends learners' knowledge and understanding of important hospitality and catering concepts. Many learners make effective use of computers to research and present their work.

- 146 Many work-based learners who enrol on NVQ programmes do not have accredited qualifications. While undertaking training, these learners benefit from a high level of support. This helps them to further develop their knowledge and skills. One learner working in the kitchen of a care home for older people used her new skills effectively to improve the quality and range of the food that she prepared and served to residents. Learners have a good understanding of assessment criteria.
- 147 The products made by part-time learners on the wired sugar flower courses are of a very high standard. Their portfolios of evidence are well-structured and presented. They contain detailed evidence of in-depth research which significantly enhances the quality of their finished products. Learners on a part-time Italian cookery class prepare new foods to good standards and improve their understanding of regional variations in ingredients and dishes.
- 148 In 2004-2005, the rates at which learners complete and attain their qualifications on most Hospitality and Catering courses are outstanding. Leavers' attainment on NVQ work-based programmes is also outstanding. Most full-time learners attain key skills at suitable levels. They use practical activities well to collect suitable key skills evidence for their portfolios. All full-time learners achieve additional qualifications, such as basic food hygiene and Welcome Host, which increase their employability.
- 149 Full-time learners are aware of their progress and understand what they need to do to complete their qualifications. They discuss their progress at regular tutorials and agree personal learning targets with their tutors. However, learners are not always challenged enough to develop their work at higher standards or to reach their full potential.
- 150 All learners on work-based NVQ programmes benefit from the one-to-one coaching and support they receive from their tutors. They have a great deal of control over their own learning. They work closely with their assessor to plan assessment opportunities which fit in with the demands of their work. They also make very good use of distance learning materials to help develop their knowledge and understanding of important concepts. Learners' portfolios are well-organised and presented. These part-time learners know what they have achieved and what they need to do to complete their qualifications.
- 151 Most full-time learners are well motivated. Their attendance and punctuality are good, and often very good. In practical classes, learners take pride in their personal appearance and enjoy their work. Many learners have additional learning needs on entry to their programme and lack confidence. However, their confidence increases as their skills and knowledge develop.
- 152 The self-confidence and self-esteem of many work-based learners have increased significantly since they started training. They are highly motivated and aware that gaining accredited qualifications can enhance their future promotion and employment prospects. Learners also report the benefits of training to their personal lives. One

learner described how she was now more adventurous when preparing food at home. Another learner considers that her involvement in learning has made her a better role model for her young children.

## Art and Design

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
---

- 153 The college offers a BTEC First Diploma in Media and an introductory Diploma in Art, Media and Design. It also offers a wide range of National Diploma courses in fine art, fashion, graphics, photography and media. The learning area also offers a wide range of A levels in art, design and media and an Access to Art and Design course.
- 154 Learners' standards are good in most courses. They are very good in A level photography, the National Diploma in Media and the introductory Diploma in Art, Media and Design. Learners on the second year National Diploma in Fashion produce high quality outcomes that show a high degree of professionalism. Learners' standards on the Access to Art and Design course are satisfactory.
- 155 All learners in media have very good subject knowledge. They have a sound grasp of specialist vocabulary and have good analytical skills. However, learners' standards of drawing from observation are not consistently high across the learning area. The standards of observation drawing of the year one learners on the National Diploma in Fashion are weak.
- 156 National Diploma and A level learners in photography, learners on the National Diploma in Fashion year two, and National Diploma in Graphics have high quality sketchbooks and workbooks. These are well-annotated, well-organised and have very good examples of research. However, the standard of learners' sketchbook and workbook work in general is too varied. In too many cases they do not show enough evidence of developing themes and ideas, or of investigating processes. Learners' three dimensional work is of a good standard.
- 157 Learners' presentation skills are excellent in media, graphics, photography and fashion. However, the quality of learners' presentation skills is not consistently good across all subjects. Most learners make good use of information communications technology in their work. Learners on the National Diploma in Graphics make very good use of programmes such as Photoshop and Dreamweaver.
- 158 Learners across all subjects generally make good progress. They understand how analysis of critical and contextual references can be used to develop ideas and techniques. Generally, they have good research skills. Learners on the introductory diploma make very good progress in all of their work, achieving standards well above those required for a level 1 course.
- 159 Almost all learners are well-motivated and enthusiastic about their studies. They are confident and respond well to tasks that teachers give them. They work well independently and with their peers. Many learners have very good oral skills and express their ideas clearly. They argue constructively and discuss productively in groups. They evaluate their work and that of their peers objectively.

- 160 Learners generally make good use of their time to improve their work. However, learners' attendance in a few classes is poor.

### **History, Philosophy and Theology**

<b>Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
---

- 161 The college offers a limited range of courses in this learning area. These include A and AS level courses in history and the International Baccalaureate (IB).
- 162 Learners achieve satisfactory standards in history. They generally achieve good standards in the IB course.
- 163 In history learners have an appropriate understanding of their work. They develop appropriate knowledge about chronology and various topics studied in their courses, such as the Depression. They can explain the causes and consequences of significant events.
- 164 In the IB learners have good levels of knowledge and understanding in subjects such as geography, science and psychology.
- 165 Overall, learners develop appropriate skills in their subjects. In most cases their files are well organised and contain appropriate records of work. In history, learners extract information from a range of sources of evidence to develop well reasoned arguments. IB learners generally make good progress in developing higher order skills of research, synthesis and analysis.
- 166 Most learners speak confidently in class. Their information technology skills are good. Many make good use of information communications technology to present their work. In most cases their skills in application of number are appropriate to the courses that they follow.
- 167 Overall, in A and AS level history, learners' rates of completion and attainment have declined in recent years. Few learners gain high grades. Learners on the IB course attain well, although the course pass rate has decreased slightly over the past three years.
- 168 Learners progress well through their courses and acquire relevant knowledge, understanding and skills. Most learners on both history and IB courses develop a good range of subject terminology and concepts. Many have well maintained files.
- 169 Learners' attendance is good. Most learners are well motivated and have good attitudes to their work. They work well in teams and have good thinking and problem solving skills. In a few classes the small number of learners in the group limits their development in the key skill working with others.

## Social Sciences

### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

- 170 The college offers a limited range of courses in this learning area. These include A and AS level courses in geography, sociology and access to humanities. It also offers a newly introduced AS level course in world development.
- 171 Overall learners on the A level geography course achieve very good standards. Learners on the AS level geography and world development courses achieve good standards. Learners on the A and AS levels sociology courses and the access to humanities course achieve satisfactory standards.
- 172 Learners' completion rates on A and AS level courses are generally satisfactory. Learners' completion rates on the access to humanities course are less good.
- 173 Learners' attainment rate in A level geography is very good. Their attainment rate in AS geography is good. Learners' attainment rates in A and AS levels sociology and the access course are satisfactory.
- 174 All learners on geography and world development courses have a very good understanding of the work. They have good place knowledge and develop a good conceptual understanding of key principles, such as those associated with a study of hydrology and drainage basins. They can apply their knowledge to present clear arguments, for example in evaluating the impact of aid on developing countries, and in support of a particular viewpoint. Their oral, written and practical work are good.
- 175 All learners on sociology and access courses have appropriate subject knowledge and an understanding of key concepts. They can recall information and use local case studies to illustrate hypotheses to good effect. Most learners use their knowledge appropriately to interpret contemporary issues. They draw very effectively on their own experiences in extending their understanding of key ideas, for example in their work on health inequalities, or equal opportunities in sport. Learners' written work in sociology and access courses is of an appropriate standard.
- 176 Learners in geography have very good subject knowledge. Those on sociology and access courses have appropriate subject knowledge. Learners on all courses research a wide variety of sources of information to good effect. All learners apply their problem solving skills well to gain a better understanding of their work. Their oral skills are good. Many learners on all courses have good skills in information communications technology and application of number.
- 177 Overall learners make good progress in geography and satisfactory progress in sociology and the access course. Most learners contribute well in lessons and make appropriate notes. In the best cases, such as in world development and geography, learners have detailed and well organised files. These are an effective record of their work and a good basis for revision. In other cases there are not enough completed assignments to provide learners with the necessary revision resources to gain high grades.

178 Learners' attendance and punctuality are good. Most learners are well motivated and organise their time well.

### **Languages, Literature and Culture (English, Welsh, Spanish, French, German)**

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
---

179 The college provides A and AS level courses in French and Welsh; A, AS and GCSE courses in Spanish, and an A level German course. There are also English language and literature and English literature courses at A and AS levels, and English language courses at A, AS and GCSE levels

180 Learners' attainment rates at A, AS and GCSE levels in modern foreign languages and second language Welsh are very good. The majority of learners attain high grades.

181 Learners' attainment rates for A and AS levels in English subjects are good, although few learners attain high grades. The attainment rate of AS learners who completed an English language module in January 2006 is very good. Learners' attainment rate in GCSE English is satisfactory.

182 Learners generally complete their courses well. Their completion rates in the learning area are improving overall.

183 The standard of learners' work at A and AS levels in modern foreign languages and second language Welsh are outstanding. The standard of learners' work in A and AS level English are very good overall. The standard of learners' work in GCSE English is satisfactory.

184 Learners in modern foreign languages reach high standards. They make very good progress. They acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills. They have good oral skills and are confident when they take part in oral work. They research their work well and develop very good critical analysis and problem solving skills. They work well independently. They apply the skills and knowledge that they gain to support their peers and regularly engage in peer marking activities.

185 In English, learners work competently but they do not always take an active part in their learning. Many do not read and extend their studies outside the classroom. In a small number of lessons a few learners do not work independently enough. They do not demonstrate as high a level of independence and critical thinking skills as those learners who study modern foreign languages.

186 All learners use technical terminology well in oral and written work and they become more confident in their subject area.

187 All learners complete regular assessment tasks. In modern foreign languages and Welsh they use teachers' feedback well and constructively to improve their written work and to inform their personal learning development. They set themselves appropriate individual learning targets. However, in English not enough learners use

assessment criteria well enough to improve their work. They do not set themselves appropriate personal targets that would help them to develop higher order skills.

- 188 Learners are well behaved, polite and co-operative. They work well with each other. Learners from outside the UK integrate well in classes.
- 189 Most learners are punctual and their attendance in A level classes is good. Learners' attendance in GCSE English evening classes is more variable. Learners' experiences are occasionally restricted by the small number of learners in some classes.
- 190 All learners benefit from a good personal tutorial system. They are supported well both personally and with their academic work. Attendance in a few tutorial sessions is poor.

### **Independent Living Skills**

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
--

- 191 Learners often begin their college courses with low levels of confidence. At college they make new friends and gain new interests. This adds to the quality of their lives. Those learners who are able, improve their basic and wider key skills. This is often from a very low baseline. Learners develop a wide range of life and work related skills and begin to make plans for the future. They fully understand that they can make use of these skills in employment and in the community. This leads to a significant growth in their self confidence and they become more positive about their future life chances.
- 192 Attainment, completion and progression are very good and often outstanding. Almost all learners gain their main qualifications. They also attain a wide range, and a significant number, of appropriate qualifications. For example, basic skill qualifications in literacy and numeracy, key skills such as improving own learning and working with others, English Speaking Board awards, the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award and many Open College Network awards. For many learners, this is the first time that they have achieved nationally recognised qualifications.
- 193 Almost all learners complete their courses. Many move on to courses at the same or higher levels within the learning area or progress into other vocational areas. A few leave college to go on to work-based learning or employment. Nearly all learners on a programme aimed at engaging learners who have not previously been involved in education move onto further training in the college or with other providers. For these young people this is an outstanding achievement. A third of learners on a programme that helps learners to make the transition into employment find jobs at the end of their course. This is a very good outcome.
- 194 Many learners make outstanding progress in their learning and in managing their behaviour over time. Learners are very enthusiastic about their courses and they are proud of their achievements.

- 195 All learners understand that what they learn in college will help them lead more independent adult lives. Learners look after themselves using the skills that they have gained in college for independent living.
- 196 All learners benefit from very good opportunities to find out about the world of work. They take part in a wide range of work placements such as in engineering, retailing and garages. They learn to take further responsibility, be polite to customers and show initiative. A few learners' progress is outstanding. They have been so successful in their work placements that they have gained employment and left college. Lower attaining learners enjoy, and increase their independence in realistic and meaningful work experience within the college, for example in the college's sports centre, shop and café.
- 197 All learners are keen to serve the wider community. They take part in valuable conservation work with the National Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Activities include beach cleaning, footpath clearance and making picnic tables and benches. Learners also help to maintain a garden in a residential home for elderly people. They develop an interest in gardening which they make use of at home.
- 198 All learners take part in enterprise initiatives. They learn about marketing, how to assess personal risks in the workplace and develop their problem solving skills. They learn to work in a team, respect others and gain self confidence.
- 199 All learners are well aware of the need for basic health and safety. They gain a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and of important health issues. They apply this knowledge in real situations. They know what to do about bullying, how to recognise pain and what to do when visiting the doctor.
- 200 In college, almost all learners learn to manage with less support than they had in school. They recognise and value the very clear gains they make in independence. Many learners learn to travel to college and work placements on their own, cook for themselves and organise their own work. They become more confident and learn to work with or alongside others. They make very good use of these important gains in interpersonal skills to work successfully in teams.
- 201 Peer support is very good. Many learners support and encourage each other well in their sessions. Learners in the transition to adult provision prepare and perform individual dance routines to music of their own choice. They rehearse their dance steps until they are accurate, in their own time. These routines are exciting and innovative. Learners watch each other perform, evaluate their competence and give scores out of 10. They are careful to make sure that their comments are supportive.
- 202 Learners' use of technology and computer skills is outstanding. They use these new skills well to support their learning and to make their leisure time more enjoyable. For example, they research and save images for Powerpoint presentations with animation, and use email to contact new friends and widen their horizons. Learners take part in a video conference with another college. They compare their curriculum, discuss their interests and share their future plans. Learners prepare for this challenging event thoroughly. They reflect on their experience at college and then

decide what to talk about. They work out who will do what and when. They make excellent use of their developing speaking and listening skills.

203 Most learners attend very well and are punctual. Generally they behave very well. With good staff support, the most disabled learners reduce their inappropriate behaviour over time.

204 Learners plan well for independent living. They listen carefully to an education support officer's experience of living in a bedsit. They work out the furniture layout and use catalogues to price the furniture they need. They practice their numeracy skills and use calculators accurately to work out how much they spend. One learner understands how to 'round up' numbers. For him, this is outstanding progress.

## **Provider's response to the report findings**

Swansea College welcomes the opportunity to respond to the report produced following the inspection of its provision undertaken by Estyn inspectors. The College has made considerable progress on a number of fronts since the previous inspection in 2002 and it is pleasing that this progress, built on a strategy of continuous improvement, has been acknowledged in the findings of the inspection team.

To have maintained, and indeed extended, the Grade 1 profile is certainly testimony to the hard work of the staff and every effort will now be made to share the good practice identified in the report throughout the rest of the College.

The recognition given to the College's aim of placing learning and the learner at the core of its activities, and to the investment made in learner support, provides reassurance that the strategy is correct and that it will facilitate the longer term aim of achieving Grade 1 provision across the board.

The self-assessment process at the College has now matured to the point that it was reassuring to have it noted that there was 'a close match to the findings of the Estyn inspection team'. The issues of greater consistency and compliance had already been identified by the College and will be addressed, along with the other recommendations contained within the report.

The College is very aware that standards need to be improved in certain learning areas and the work of the advanced practitioners and accredited assessors will have a major role to play in this respect. Work is also already in hand to consider ways in which management structures can be adjusted to support this further.

The College is very fortunate that it has a governing body of such high calibre. The report has acknowledged how effectively it operates. The governors will ensure that the best possible use is made of the information contained in the report in order to promote improvement.

Finally, the College would like to thank the inspection team, and the reporting inspector in particular, for the professional approach which prevailed both prior to, and during, the inspection.

## Appendix 1

### **The evidence base of the inspection**

Eight inspectors and 18 peer assessors spent a total of 142 days at the college.

These inspectors and peer assessors visited:

- 155 classes, including training sessions in the workplace;
- a variety of other activities delivered by the college;
- tutorial periods; and
- key skills sessions.

Members of the team had meetings with:

- the principal;
- the clerk to the governors;
- the chair of governors and members of the governing body;
- senior and middle managers and a wide range of teaching, support and administrative staff;
- learners studying in the learning areas being inspected and in other learning areas in the college;
- employers involved with the learning areas being inspected and with other learning areas and in the college; and
- representatives of agencies linked with the college.

The team also considered:

- a selection of learners work; and
- documentation provided by the college both before and during the inspection.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Christine Hooper HMI	Reporting Inspector
Eleanor Davies HMI	Deputy Reporting Inspector
Una Connolly HMI	Team Inspector
Gareth Wyn Jones HMI	Team Inspector
Claire Yardley HMI	Team Inspector
Sarah Lewis AI	Team Inspector
Kathy Needs AI	Team Inspector
Richard Sibson AI	Team Inspector
Julian Dinsdale	Peer Assessor
Sally Elliot	Peer Assessor
Lorraine Groves	Peer Assessor
Bill Mason	Peer Assessor
Caroline Peek	Peer Assessor
Huw Phillips	Peer Assessor
Gillian Fothergill	Peer Assessor
Margaret Griffiths	Peer Assessor
Celia Jones	Peer Assessor
Martyn Dallimore Jones	Peer Assessor
Guy Lacey	Peer Assessor
Sharron Lusher	Peer Assessor
Kay Martin	Peer Assessor
Karen Roberts	Peer Assessor
Rhiannon Thew	Peer Assessor
Lisa Thomas	Peer Assessor
Barry Walters	Peer Assessor
Amanda Wilde	Peer Assessor
Jo Fowler	Nominee