

# Curriculum Policy

## 1. This policy has been written taking into account:

- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- School Inspections Act 1996
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales, 2004
- SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2004)
- Removing Barriers to Achievement
- A curriculum for all learners 2008

## 2. Rational

Pengwern College is an Independent Specialist College, which provides high quality care and education for students aged 16 to 25 with severe to moderate learning disabilities. Students can come on a day or residential basis for between one and three years. We pride ourselves on our commitment to providing an individualised educational programme through our specialised teaching and learning environment. We help students gain the skills and confidence they need to move onto the next stage of their lives; whether that is gaining employment, a work related placement, moving towards independent living or progressing with further study.

The curriculum is based on the principals of Foundation Learning with most students studying at Entry Level or pre Entry levels. Wherever possible external accreditation is made available however the curriculum is led by students needs rather than by accreditation and we place a great deal of value on the 'soft skills' acquired during students' time at college which cannot always be aligned to accredited courses. We provide a balance of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities for each of our learners.

## 3. Aims of the curriculum

The aim of our curriculum is to provide a further education that enables students to develop their functional, and essential skills, vocational and personal skills. We provide individualised programs tailored to meet the needs of the student, enabling them to gain accreditations and work and life skills.

On entry to the college students are assessed in terms of suitability for each of the Pathways (Exploring Work and Exploring Independence), with reference to prior achievement and information from previous education establishments. A panel comprising of the transition team and senior and middle management group decide on the best pathway for the specific needs of the student and their final destination goal. Students on the Exploring Independence pathway are then discussed further to decide which tier would best suit their learning needs; Logic, Sensory and Progression. Once this decision is made students are consulted in terms of choosing relevant subjects to correspond with skills development and destination work focused goals post college. Each student is placed on either an Exploring Independence Pathway (Pearson Personal progress qualification) and Exploring Work Pathway (C&G Skills for working life qualification) and (Essential Skills Wales).

The curriculum aims to offer a broad and varied range of opportunities in order to enable students to improve their skills in all areas of their life. For young people with learning disabilities it is important that the curriculum offers opportunities to practise skills in a wide variety of settings in order to consolidate and generalise skills learnt in formal settings. Many students will have achieved academic skills within a school setting but as yet are unable to apply them to everyday contexts without reinforcement.

The curriculum focuses on developing the students' understanding of the world around him or her, and of social interactions and relationships. It values the process as much as the achievement. It is flexible in order to be

responsive to the needs of the individual student. It is delivered in an integrated manner incorporating learning, care and therapy.

Communication is a crucial part of the curriculum for all students regardless of which pathway they follow. For some students this means improving their ability to express themselves or improve their comprehension using the best form of communication for their needs. For other students it is based more on developing social skills and how these apply within different contexts such as work placements.

The curriculum aims to:

- Cater for the needs of individual students of both sexes from all ethnic and social groups that meet the college's admissions criteria.
- Facilitate student's acquisition of knowledge, skills and qualities which will help them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically and morally, so that they may become independent, responsible, useful, thinking, confident and considerate members of the community.
- Create and maintain an exciting and stimulating learning environment
- Ensure that each student's programme of study has continuity and progression
- Ensure that there is a match between the student and the activities s/he has asked to take part in.
- Provide a broad and balanced range of opportunities.
- Recognise the crucial role which parents play in the young person's education and make every effort to encourage parental involvement in the transition process.
- Match the programmes of study for each student to their long term destination goals.
- Encourage independence in all areas.
- Treat students in a dignified way, giving them choices and responsibilities.

#### **4. Responsibilities & Entitlement**

- Students are entitled to a flexible program of study which meets their needs and helps them to progress towards their destination goals.
- Students have entitlement to all aspects of the curriculum in line with their funding.
- The College involves parents or carers in the Curriculum Provision by regular communication via reviews, surveys, key worker contact etc.
- The college sets clear goals for students upon transition into the college which link to students' destination goals and ensure expectations are understood by all.
- The funding rationale along with the ILR will set the number of expected hours for each aspect of the college provision and the college will provide evidence to show that these have been met.
- Students are entitled to choose from any of the vocational options available, both courses allow for flexibility to experience different vocational and skills related areas.
- Students will have regular tutorials with their personal tutor and meet with their keyworker on a regular basis.
- All students are expected to take part in vocational, enrichment, community sport and recreation, personal & social development activities, in whichever way they are able to in order to maximise their progression and social interaction.
- All students will be included in their individual planning, target setting, transition reviews and annual reviews.
- Personal tutors will ensure students are aware of their progress on a regular basis.

- The college will listen to students and parents wishes when adding new options to the curriculum as well as linking them to local workforce needs.
- Where a specific course is required which cannot be met at the college, we will seek to find another provision and enable the student to access this.
- Students are responsible for following their chosen timetable and attending all sessions. Any issues should be addressed with Personal Tutors.

## 5. Implementation

The curriculum is designed so that each student's timetable can be specifically planned to meet their needs and wishes based on their long term destination goals.

There are two pathways for the curriculum;

- Exploring Work focuses more on preparing for work skills, essential skills and specific vocational areas
- Exploring Independence focuses on independence skills and uses vocational sessions as a vehicle to develop personal and social skills. Functional/Essential skills are embedded into all activities for all students.

The two pathways are designed so that all aspects of a student's care and education are managed by the same team of staff. This ensures a consistent approach across all areas of the college and enables students to evidence their learning in all aspects of their college life. For residential students this means that their key worker and SLS is assigned to their residential accommodation and are involved in the extended curriculum planning and assessing.

- **Personal & Social Development**

This is covered through a range of sessions for all students but the programme of study will vary according to their needs. The PSD curriculum is delivered in the Exploring Work Pathway through the preparation for work C&G units along with other enrichment based learning sessions. In the Exploring Independence pathway it is delivered through a variety of sessions delivered by the personal tutor, life skills, social skills and independence skills.

- **Independence skills/Life skills/Social skills**

This is timetabled for all Exploring Independence students but the percentage of curriculum time and programme will vary according to the pathway tier (Logic, Sensory, Progression) and qualification accreditation. All students need to spend time developing these Personal and Social or independence skills for the following reasons:

- For learners to maximise their level of independence in whichever living environment they reside
- For learners to be able to express preferences about their lifestyle
- For learners to be involved in decision-making about how to spend their time
- For learners to know that it is important to keep themselves safe
- For learners to be able to observe safe practices
- For learners to be involved in keeping their home healthy and safe
- For learners to be involved in keeping themselves healthy
- For learners to be involved in caring for themselves
- For learners to recognise the steps needed to lead a healthy lifestyle and how they can contribute to it.

- **Essential skills: communication, application of number and ICT/Digital skills**

These are embedded into all of the sessions in order to ensure that skills are generalised and applied to real-life situations. Students on the Exploring Work pathway are entered for the Essential skills for working life C&G accreditation Entry level which they will build and develop over their two or three years at College. Wherever possible opportunities within the extended curriculum to consolidate and practise these skills are encouraged.

- **Vocational options**

Vocation options are offered to all students and form the largest part of the curriculum especially for Employment students. Students in year one are encouraged to access a range of options whilst students in years 2 & 3 will have clearer ideas of what they want to do and so more specific. Work experience programmes will be developed to

complement the vocational training. For students in the Independence Pathway, vocational options are an important way of increasing their life experiences and developing personal & social skills.

- **The Entry Level Certificate in Skills for Working Life Entry 2 & 3**

Devised within the vocational areas to use practical tasks as a means of bridging learners with social, physical or learning difficulties, from colleges into further education, training and potential employment.

The accredited qualifications have been further extended to enable greater choice and flexibility, and include the opportunity to gain employability skills. The Qualification provides progression opportunities into further learning, training and potential (supported) employment

It provides opportunities for experiential learning along with a basic understanding of industrial practice through performing routine tasks which develop mental and physical co-ordination, dexterity, mobility and confidence. These qualifications can assist learners' chances of progressing by developing a wide range of personal, interpersonal and work related skills.

- **The Entry Level 1 Qualifications in Personal Progress**

Designed to be wide ranging qualifications that allow learners working at Entry 1 or below to develop their skills in a number of different areas and is designed to support learners to participate as citizens within the community.

These qualifications cover areas such as communication, reading and writing, mathematics, developing skills for independent living, developing skills for the workplace, or engaging with the world around you.

Learners will be able to develop knowledge and/or skills to operate independently and effectively in life, learning and work.

- **Work experience**

This is a vital element of the curriculum especially for students whose destination goals include employment aims. A wide range of opportunities exist within the local area and these are continually being expanded. The college has a good reputation with local employers who are keen to support the students to gain experience. We aim to enable all students to access at least half a day work experience a week. For some students the work experience may form the largest part of their timetable. Other students who are not yet ready for the wider world of work can access work experiences on the college site such as: the café, food coop, college shop, horticultural, maintenance and catering.

- **The extended curriculum**

The extended curriculum is also an important aspect of the college life especially for residential students. (See Policy on Extended Curriculum). Accreditation in the extended curriculum links with skills and targets set for the formal curriculum. A wide variety of activities are offered and students are encouraged to be involved in the planning of events. Most activities are organised in small groups linked to the residential accommodation and using local community facilities. However, every term there are also some larger activities for the whole college which enable us to involve the local community within the college setting.

- **External speakers**

External speakers are planned within the curriculum, a termly session with the local police liaison officer is delivered to learners. The police liaison officer follows the school beat framework ([www.schoolbeat.org](http://www.schoolbeat.org)) the sessions have three core areas: Anti-social behaviour, Drugs/Alcohol and Substance misuse and Personal Safety. All lessons are linked to the PSE framework and most have numeracy and literacy aspects.

- **Therapeutic support**

Therapy for some students is an integral part of their curriculum. Access to individual therapy intervention is dependent on needs. All students are assessed on entry to the college by a speech therapist, educational psychologist and occupational therapist. Where individual intervention is required this is built into individuals timetables. The speech therapy team are highly involved in all aspects of the students' curriculum and give advice and training to all staff to support students learning. Some students also require hydrotherapy. We have a trained assistant and organise weekly sessions at a local specialist pool to facilitate this. The college also has its own sensory room designed to encourage interaction for those students with more complex physical or communication needs and in addition there is a relaxation room which can be used by any student as part of their care and therapy. Student's communication skills are assessed again during their transition year in order to ensure that an up to date communication report is available for their future placement.

## 6. Equal Opportunities

- The college's curriculum is designed for educational and social inclusion.
- The curriculum should meet the varying needs of the students regardless of race, gender, cultural diversity, religion or other difference.
- Attention is given to individual needs at all stages of planning and recording.
- All students are respected and listened to.
- Every effort is taken to ensure all students have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum in line with their funding. Priority is given to students where activities match their destination goals or vocational options. Where barriers exist the college will take all reasonable action to remove them within the boundaries of health & safety and funding.
- Students under the age of 18 may be restricted for some activities where there is an age restriction. Alternative activities will be offered on these occasions.

## 7. Monitoring

The curriculum will be continuously monitored as part of the quality assurance cycle within the college as well as coming under the scrutiny of Estyn in their inspection cycle. Staff, parent and student surveys will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure we are meeting the needs of the students and develop the curriculum in line with the changing student population.

The college's Governance Board and regional education management ensures that the curriculum also meets the needs of the local community and local workforce. Feedback from employers who offer work experience builds into the quality cycle and ensures students are prepared for working life.

Teaching & learning observations are organised twice yearly and monitored and moderated by the management team. Links with other schools and colleges help to moderate the grades and ensure high quality sessions.

Links with external verifiers for accreditation ensure the internal system of assessment is accurate, fair and of a high standard.

Students are encouraged to monitor their own progress through weekly tutorials and formal person centred reviews with parents, connexions and social workers. A vigorous system for recording of planning and target setting is used which is used by staff to show progress.

## 8. Links

Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy  
Extended Curriculum Policy

Essential Skills Policy  
College Prospectus  
Staff Observation Policy  
E safety policy  
Student voice policy

**Date written:** July 2015

**Written by:** Jane Wilson

**Reviewed by:**

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