

Best practice

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd, Flintshire

Number of pupils: **135**

Age range: **11–19 years**

Date of Estyn inspection: **January 2012**



Area of sector-leading practice which has been identified during inspection and relates to a particular quality indicator:

Key Question: 1 or 2 or 3

Quality indicator: 1:2 or 2:3 or 3:3
Learners' wellbeing, care support and guidance and partnership arrangements

Aspect: 1:2:2 Participation and enjoyment in learning, 2:3:4 additional learning needs, 3:3:1 Strategic partnerships

Context and background to sector-leading practice:

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is a special school for up to 135 pupils aged from 11 to 19 years. The school opened in September 2009 following the re-organisation of special educational provision in Flintshire. The school operates on two sites. The main, purpose-built school shares a campus with Flint High School and there is an additional teaching resource base for up to 12 pupils, Cyswllt, at Elfed High School, Buckley.

Pupils at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd have a wide range of special educational needs. These include moderate, severe and complex learning

difficulties including autistic spectrum disorders. Many pupils have associated communication, behavioural or sensory difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational needs.

Around half of Ysgol Maes Hyfryd pupils spend part of the week included in mainstream classes developing their skills and independence, and following mainstream accredited courses.

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd's inclusion policy sets out a clear philosophy that every student has the right to have his or her individual needs met in an appropriate setting. The school believes that each student is entitled to an individual pathway which, for many students, will include inclusion in a mainstream setting for some part of the week.

The school used the amalgamation of three special schools as an opportunity to develop an inclusion programme of distinct and appropriate individual pathways for each student. This programme includes:

- discrete special school provision;
- special school provision with inclusive links within Flint High School or another mainstream school near a student's home; or
- provision at the Cyswllt resource base located at Elfed High School.

Currently, nearly half of the Ysgol Maes Hyfryd students spend some of their time in provision in one of eight mainstream schools in Flintshire. All key stage 4 students follow accredited courses.

"The inclusion programme has enhanced learning opportunities and improved outcomes for students."

In Cyswllt, the students follow mainstream lessons for between 25% and 90% of the timetable, depending on the individual needs of each student. This arrangement has been successfully maintained by the reinforcement of mainstream lesson tasks within the resource base.

Support staff at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd and Cyswllt continually monitor and support the students to ensure a consistency that allows them to remain on task within the mainstream class.

Description of nature of strategy or activity:

The strategy adopted at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is to enhance the curriculum experiences of individual students and to focus on the strengths of each student. This helps students to access, where appropriate, accredited courses. Although accreditation is an important aspect of the inclusion programme, students also develop their self-esteem, confidence and communication skills during their placements in mainstream classes.

A significant recent development at Cyswllt has been the amalgamation of the mainstream additional learning needs base with the Ysgol Maes Hyfryd resource base under the leadership of the Ysgol Maes Hyfryd teacher. As a result, students are able to access wider opportunities, staff share and develop their expertise more effectively and the base is more sustainable.

Monitoring arrangements are critical to the successful outcomes of the inclusion programme. These arrangements include detailed pupil observations by support staff and regular meetings between the co-ordinators and termly meetings of the senior leadership team as well as formal annual reviews.

What impact has this work had on provision and learners' standards?

Each inclusion programme is based on the needs of the individual student and the impact on provision, standards and outcomes is also measured on an individual basis.

The inclusion programme has enhanced learning opportunities and improved outcomes for students. In particular, students have followed a range of accredited courses in subjects such as science, art, media and drama.

Specific outcomes for pupils include:

- significant improvements in attendance with individual examples of improvement from 67% to 98% and from 68% to 97%; and
- improved examination results with 4 students in Cyswllt gaining a total of 20 GCSE passes between them in 2010.

There have been significant improvements in many students' reading, spelling and mathematics ages with:

- 80% of students increasing their reading age by an average of 11 months;
- 98% increasing their spelling age by an average of 6.7 months; and
- 98% increasing their mathematics age by an average of 9.2 months.

In addition, students showed improved confidence and self-esteem and increased social inclusion, for example through participating in a mainstream football team and attending other after-school clubs and residential activities.