

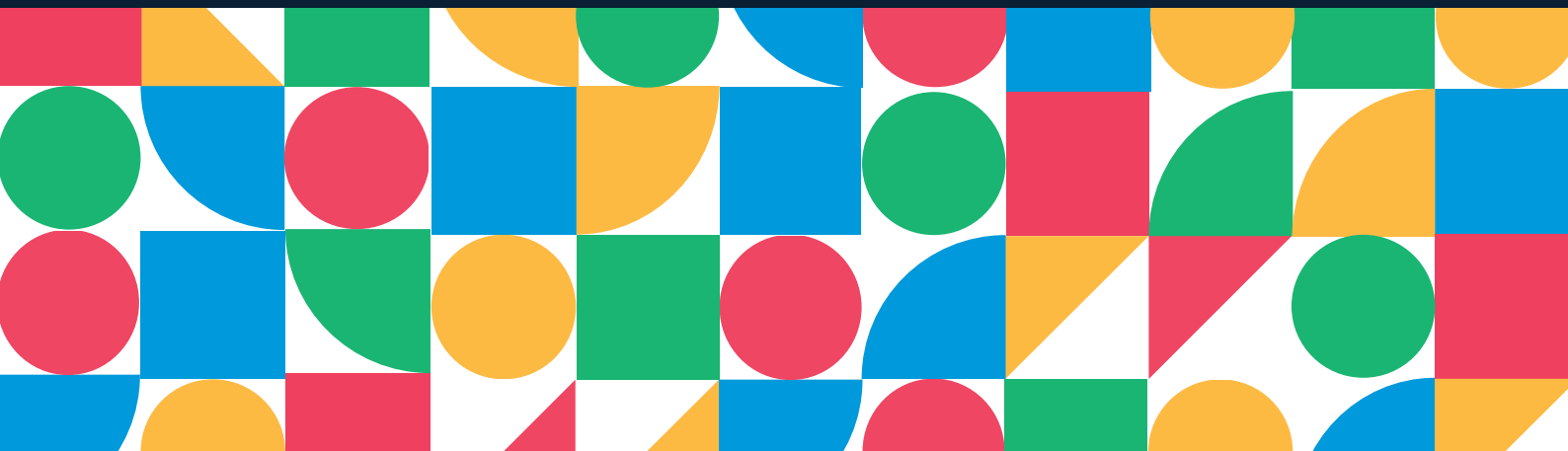
**Derwen
College**



Trustees' Reflections 2024



Registered Charity No. 1153280
Company Registration No. 8615826



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The trustees (governors), who are also the directors, of Derwen College Charity, here report on the activities of the Charity in 2024.

- △ Kathleen Kimber – Chair and Chair of Search and Governance
- △ Mark Lord – Vice-Chair
- △ Lucy Beaumont resigned 31 January 2024
- △ Louise Burns – Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance
- △ Barbara Court resigned 28 November 2024
- △ Michael Cowan – Chair of Standards and Effectiveness
- △ Vicki Cox – Vice-Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance
- △ Paul Evison resigned 25 November 2024
- △ Andrew Grove
- △ Barry Langfield – Vice-Chair of Resources and Business, appointed as trustee 20 March 2024
- △ Elizabeth Leigh – Vice-Chair of Standards and Effectiveness
- △ Abigail Plowden – Appointed as trustee 20 March 2024
- △ David Preston resigned 30 January 2024
- △ Jamie Ward – Chair of Resources and Business, appointed Vice-Chair 30 July 2024

Committee co-optees

- △ Paul Crosby
 - △ Barry Langfield – until 20 March 2024 – Vice-Chair of Resources and Business
 - △ Abigail Plowden – Until 20 March 2024
 - △ Helen Smith
-
- △ Carol Thompson – Company Secretary
 - △ Mark Baker – Governance Professional

We place on record our sincere thanks to all trustees and co-opted committee members who give so generously of their time and constructively of their experience and wisdom. Resignations have been accepted with much regret. They were from people who have felt unable to continue to commit to the demands of time they believed the role required. We offer our very best wishes to them all and look forward to seeing them as friends of the College. We were fortunate to be able to use the resignations early in the year as opportunities to appoint as trustees people we had recently appointed as co-optees to board committees.

Much information about the Charity, its activities and endeavours is to be found on the website:
www.derwen.ac.uk

Since Derwen College qualifies as small under section 382 of the Companies Act 2006, the Strategic Report, required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Directors' Report) Regulations 2013, has been omitted.



Derwen College's Mission, Strategic Priorities and Values

Mission: to enable everyone to achieve beyond what they and others believe possible.

Strategic Priorities: Priorities serve to promote Derwen College's purpose: the development and care of students and residents.



Ensure our long-term sustainability

Areas of focus

- △ Rigorous financial management
- △ Constant review and update of provision
- △ Appropriate diversification
- △ Risk assurance measures
- △ Environmental commitment



Excel in every aspect of our operation

Areas of focus

- △ Student programmes and outcomes
- △ Our holistic approach to people
- △ Quality improvement
- △ Staff CPD and performance management
- △ Staff wellbeing
- △ Compliance monitoring
- △ Response to changing legislative environment and the SEND landscape
- △ Being a learning organisation




Make the most of our exceptional resources

Areas of focus

- △ Accommodation review and planning
- △ Campus management
- △ Commercial developments
- △ Satellite opportunities
- △ Safeguarding
- △ Partnerships

Be trailblazers, initiators and researchers



Areas of focus

- △ Our position / reputation within the sector
- △ Risk appetite
- △ Initiatives and innovations
- △ Marketing, publicity and communication with stakeholders
- △ Award applications
- △ Build thirst for increased understanding

Our Values:



Derwen
College

We are
Dedicated
Diverse
Dynamic
Derwen

A place of possibility

2024

From strength to strength

Our 2023 Reflections concluded with our statement that we believed the Derwen College charity to be in a strong position, much having been achieved. We were committed to embedding the many developments in hand and pursuing our rigorous drive for continuous improvement. This is what has characterised 2024.

Our provision for students with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) now successfully includes residential accommodation. Additional programme provision, Nurture 2, has been planned and implemented.



A Student Wellbeing Strategy 2024–26 has been implemented, focusing on the following themes:

- Social, emotional and mental health
- Physical exercise
- Diet and Nutrition
- Quality of Life
- Sleep



Derwen College Consulting Ltd has completed its initial international contract. Derwen College has been sharing expertise and working with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH) to create and develop the country's first ever specialist further education college, Gharnata Training Centre.



The year-end accounts showed a positive outturn, as did the budget for 2025.

- The Ludlow satellite has successfully recruited students and reopened.
- The Colleague Engagement Survey showed the most positive results for several years.
- Derwen College became part of the AoC College Collective, a peer sharing group of high performing colleges. Participating colleges put forward three experts each year who then receive coaching, training and accreditation from the Institute of Leadership and Management. Our first year has been successfully completed.
- Student numbers exceeded targets in September 2024. Sadly, 13 applicants were still awaiting the outcome of tribunals, a situation which gives no one satisfaction.



Snapshots of highlights and activities in 2024:

Recognitions and awards:

- ▲ NASEN Further Education Provision of the Year 2023 for the quality of student offer and range of opportunities provided for students.
- UK Career Development Award – for Careers Programme of the Year in Post-16 Education. Judges' comment: The approach was highly inclusive and underscored by strong ethical principles.
- The Nursing Team were finalists in the Royal College of Nursing annual awards with their innovative hearing programme.
- Royal Horticultural Society and Heart of England in Bloom It's your neighbourhood Award Level 4 – for work of Horticulture students and staff in Cae Glas Park, Oswestry.
- Five students were nominated for the High Sheriff of Shropshire Awards.
- On 12 May Derwen Dance Crew (DDC) hit the floor at Audacity Events' Ultimate Dance Competition. DDC came first in the musical theatre category and went straight to the Championships in February with a judges' 'Wildcard'. They also came first with their street dancing routine, with another national slot.
- Three staff members were recognised as experts in their field and became members of the Association of Colleges College Collective Expert Programme.
- Retail and Enterprise students and Hospitality and Food students are through to the next round of the World Skills competitions in table laying and enterprise.



College activities:

● **NASEN's Young Person Advisory Group**

The National Association for Special Educational Needs invited students from the Student Council to join an Advisory Group, a platform for people aged 16–25 with SEND to share their views on resources, events and training.

■ **Natspec Learner Voice Forum and Student Parliament**

The College hosted, for the first time, the Midlands regional and national Forum and Parliament. The events involved lots of planning and preparation with a mixture of in-person attendance by other Midlands specialist colleges and a live link to other regions. Students played a key role, hosting and taking part in the debates



■ **Derwen Digest** is the new student newsletter, put together and edited by students, contains update from around College, promotes clubs and societies, and gives details of key dates and activities.

■ **Hospitality student and expert beekeeper Sophie Dempsey** starred in her own 'MeMovie' at Aico HQ auditorium, in Oswestry on 20 March. The grand premiere of Sophie's MeMovie, produced by charity the WoodMor Foundation, showcased the transferable work skills she had learnt at Bee Club.

■ **The Print Shop at the Telford** site opened in the Autumn, offering a wide range of services

● **Retail & Enterprise Industry Day**

Retail students enjoyed a dedicated 'Industry Morning' in March where they explored skills needed for employment. Guest speakers included representatives from the retail sector and Police Force.

■ Forty seven students were enrolled on the **Duke of Edinburgh's Award**. Three students completed Gold and eight of last year's Gold Award students attended Buckingham Palace in May.

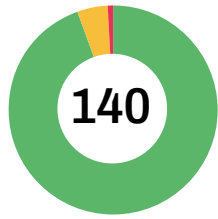
■ Students enjoyed a wonderful **Pride-themed Glitz and Glitter Party Night** organised by the Student Council.

■ The Student Council hosted the first **Paper Free Campus Day**, saving 2,700 sheets of paper.

The students in 2024

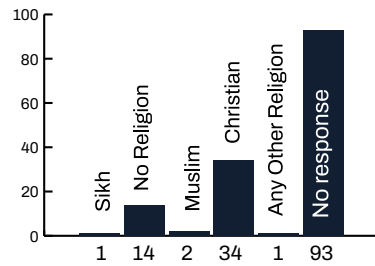
Derwen College Student Cohort 2024 Spring Term

Total number of students



- Students on Study Programme: 132
- Students on Supported Internship: 7
- Students on Springboard: 1

Religion



Ethnicity

- 130 English/Welsh/Scottish/NI
- 1 Indian
- 1 Pakistani
- 3 White and Asian
- 2 White and/or Black Caribbean
- 1 Any other white background
- 1 Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background
- 1 Any other ethnic group

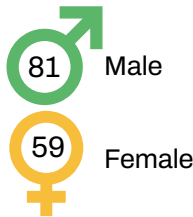


16
Learners
16-18 yrs



124
Learners
19+ yrs

Biological Sex

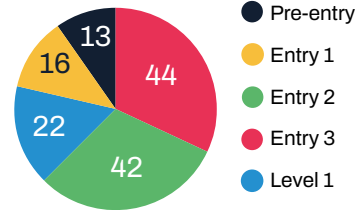


English funded

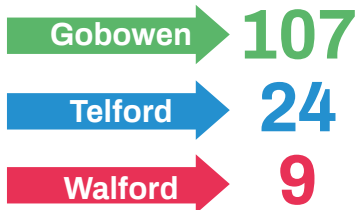


Welsh funded

Number of students working at each level



Number of students at each site



76
Residential students

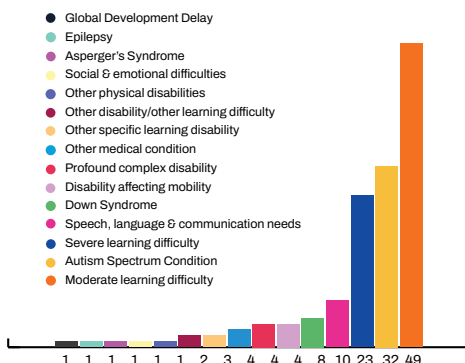


64
Day students

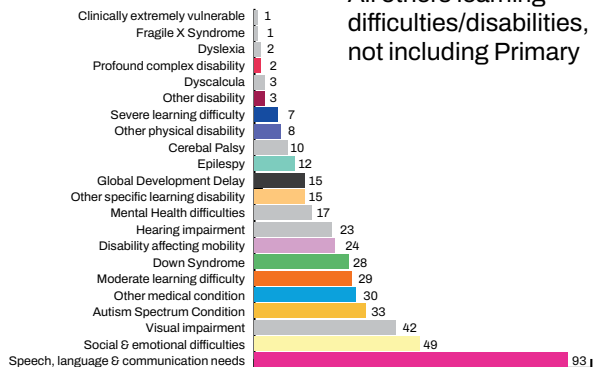
Learner's main Pathway

- 6 Sports & Fitness (Walford)
- 21 Retail & Enterprise
- 18 Performing Arts
- 5 Nurture Programme (strand 1)
- 13 Learning for Life
- 3 Horticulture (Walford)
- 17 Hospitality (Telford)
- 37 Hospitality & Food
- 18 Horticulture
- 4 Business Support, Sales & Marketing (Telford)
- 1 Hospitality and Housekeeping (Telford)

Primary learning difficulties/disabilities



All others learning difficulties/disabilities, not including Primary



Pathways and programmes

During the admissions process, students make an informed choice about which pathway or programme to embark on when they start at Derwen College. Pathways are detailed programmes, adopting a holistic approach to student development, and constantly under review. It is possible for students to link two pathways; this proves effective for many. The following pathways and programmes are available:

Gobowen: residential and day provision

- △ Horticulture (vocational pathway)
- △ Hospitality and Food (vocational pathway)
- △ Retail and Enterprise (vocational pathway)
- △ Performing Arts (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Nurture 1 and 2 (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



Telford: day provision

- △ Work and Independence (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



Walford: day provision

- △ Work and Independence (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



Ludlow: day provision

- △ Work and Independence (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



* Springboard is funded through social care

As part of most pathways, students will also access:

- Work experience
- Independence
- Sport, leisure and wellbeing
- Personal, social and health education
- Functional Skills
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance
- Learner Voice
- Student Council



Care and therapy provision is available for all students. This is often critical to student success, enabling them to access all parts of their college experience more effectively. We have occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, specialist nursing and access to clinical psychology.

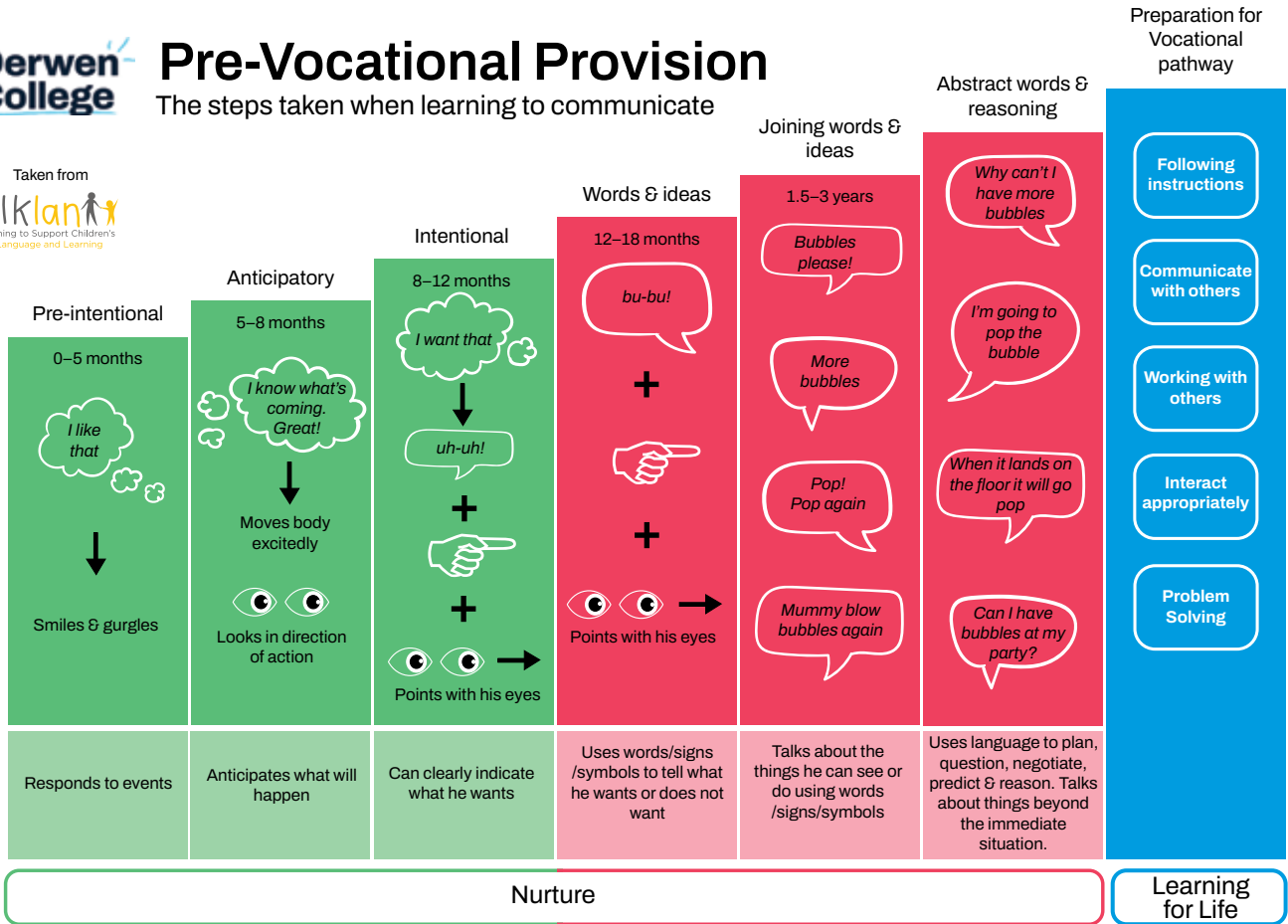
Much research has been put into preparing the Nurture 1 and 2 Pathways (now merged into one pathway) and staff training and the provision of appropriate resources and accommodation have been undertaken.



Pre-Vocational Provision

The steps taken when learning to communicate

Taken from
Eiklan
Training to Support Children's
Language and Learning



Outcomes

Student progress against their Education Health and Care Plans (EHP), or their Individual Development Plan (IDP), and their agreed personal targets, are closely monitored. The number of students proceeding to part-time employment, voluntary work or further education has increased, although their learning difficulties and disabilities are more complex than in previous years.

Derwen College ensures that working with students to enhance all their chances of success, happiness and fulfilment after college are a high priority, by developing work ready skills, increasing their independence and ability to look after themselves, and promoting social, cultural and sporting engagement and interaction.



Destination Data – Overall										
Collection – Year	Actual 19–20		Actual 20–21		Actual 21–22		Actual 22–23		Actual 23–24	
Planned Leavers	33		33		43		41		78	
Work outcomes										
Paid work 16hrs+	0	0%	0	0%	1	2.33%	3	7%	0	0%
Paid work less than 16hrs	2	6.06%	5	15.15%	4	9.30%	7	17%	3	3.8%
Voluntary work	3	9.09%	4	12.12%	9	20.93%	6	14%	9	11.5%
FE – another provider	4	12.12%	9	27.27%	16	37.21%	10	24%	8	10.3%
FE – returning to Derwen College									7	8.9%
FE – Derwen College Supported Internship									12	12.8%
FE – Derwen College Springboard									3	3.8%
Not in paid employment/looking for work	3	9.10%	0	0%	6	13.95%	1	2%	0	0%
Community activities	10	30.30%	3	9.10%	3	6.98%	10	24%	11	14.1%
Awaiting confirmation of plans (or not known at this stage)	11	33.33%	12	36.36%	4	9.30%	5	12%	25	32.1%
Living outcomes										
Supported independent living	8	24.24%	10	30%	10	23.26%	9	21%	9	11.5%
Residential placement					2	4.65%	1	2%	1	1.3%
Residential placement at Derwen College									11	14.1%
Living with family – Day student at Derwen College									11	14.1%
Living with family	17	51.52%	4	12%	17	39.53%	19	45%	16	20.5%
Living with family pending supported living	1	3.03%	8	25%	7	16.28%	6	14%	5	6.4%
Awaiting confirmation of plans (or not known at this stage)	7	21.21%	11	33%	7	16.28%	7	18%	25	32.1%

The Clients in 2024

It is one of the objectives of Derwen Charity to provide accommodation for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. The trustees work closely with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that all accommodation remains fit for purpose for the 85 students and 30 clients who reside at college.

Clients at Derwen College have been an integral part of the college community for many years, and have led very fulfilling lives, many of them living independently with minimal support. Generally, all clients are assessed and reviewed by their funding local authority on a fairly regular basis, and for those clients who have been assessed as having care and support needs, this is currently being provided by Derwen Care if the clients opts for this. Over the last four years we have seen a steady increase in the care and support required for the majority of our clients.

Our commitment is to offer high quality supported living and to continue to look at:

- how we provide for the wellbeing of the clients
- how we can ensure their long-term security
- what we can do to offer meaningful activity in their daily lives
- how we offer care and support and how we do this within current regulations and concepts of best practice.



All clients have an up-to-date tenancy agreement. Clients have access to many activities, both on- and off-site. For example, volunteering to work in The Vintage Advantage, our charity shop, and their contribution to Oswestry in Bloom's success in Cae Glas Park achieved an Award. The trustees and Senior Leadership Team are keeping this provision under close scrutiny.

Performance and quality

Derwen College, a learning establishment, is characterised by a drive for continuous improvement and has strong and varied processes of reflection, evaluation and analysis. The Quality Assurance Calendar (QAC) is updated annually and gives an overview of the depth and breadth of activity to review performance and to learn from the outcomes, so that improvement can be made. There is a strong culture of undertaking continuous professional development, commissioning audits and reports, including from external bodies, to gain the benefit of additional expertise and insight.

Internally

There is a well-established, thorough and transparent self-assessment system. Quality and the achievement of Improvement Plan targets are monitored throughout the year and the formal departmental evaluations of performance and outcomes are moderated at the end of the summer term by panels, which include trustees.

The comprehensive self-assessment and data analysis support the following judgements for the College's performance 2023–24:

- Overall effectiveness: **Good**
- Quality of education: **Good**
- Behaviours and attitudes: **Outstanding**
- Personal development: **Outstanding**
- Leadership and management: **Good**
- Safeguarding: **Effective**



Key strengths identified included:

- Curriculum intent is clear and very appropriate, laying the foundation for a well-designed, high quality curriculum that is well understood by relevant stakeholders.
- Curriculum implementation across all sites is good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced to deliver ambitious and innovative programmes appropriate to learners' individual aspirations and support needs.
- Curriculum impact is very good. Learners make excellent progress in preparing for adulthood and develop knowledge, skills and behaviours to enhance their quality of life, employment opportunities and independence in everyday life.
- Students' achievement of their planned outcomes is excellent; the number of leavers progressing into employment is particularly impressive.



Inspection and public recognition

External Quality Assurers' feedback from awarding bodies is extremely positive. Derwen College holds the Matrix Standard and was re-accredited in 2024. Comments from the report included:

- ➔ During the assessment, there was evidence provided by students, partners, and staff of a friendly, welcoming, and professional service. All stakeholders involved in the assessment believe that the support (CEIAG) provided by all staff is highly effective in preparing students for their next step.

- ➔ The wrap-around support provided by staff is reinforced by a robust approach to safeguarding and constantly measuring and evaluating the students' responses to equity, health, and well-being, and feeling safe at Derwen College.
- ➔ The pathways are supported by the embedded CEIAG and achieve excellent positive outcomes such as improving attendance, timekeeping, resilience, confidence, teamwork, and communication.
- ➔ There are many examples of Derwen College students going on to their next steps and examples of progressing beyond their own, and their parents'/carers' expectations.

Derwen College was inspected by Ofsted from 9–11 November 2021, gaining the following grades:

- ➔ **Overall effectiveness: Good**
- ➔ **Quality of education: Good**
- ➔ **Behaviours and attitudes: Outstanding**
- ➔ **Personal development: Good**
- ➔ **Leadership and management: Good**
- ➔ **Provision for learners with high needs: Good**



The report included:

Senior leaders have created a caring, calm and inclusive environment for staff and students. Staff have high standards and clear expectations of learners' behaviour. As a result, staff support learners well. Learners' behaviour and attitudes are exceptional, and they make good progress in their vocational course and independent living skills.

Learners become more independent in their personal lives. Through regular tutorials, learners participate in discussions and take more control of their decision making.

They improve their ability to travel, shop, cook and manage their personal laundry. As they acquire these skills, they move successfully into more independent living arrangements. Learners benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities... Learners are encouraged to join the thriving student union and to represent their fellow students... Representatives improve their communication skills and negotiate improvements for the benefit of all learners.

The Care Quality Commission carried out a focused inspection on 16 and 17 November 2022, reviewing specific areas identified in their 2019 inspection. The College has the following grades:

→ Is the service safe?	Good
→ Is the service effective?	Good
→ Is the service caring?	Good
→ Is the service responsive?	Good
→ Is the service well led?	Good

During the regular monitoring of Food Safety and Hygiene standards all residences were awarded a five-star rating.

Many members of the public do not fully understand learning difficulties and disabilities and their impact on individuals – and on those closest to them. Progress is equally difficult to understand. What may seem a small and inconsequential step to some people can, in fact, be a major achievement and life changing.



Staff and trustees are committed to ensuring life-enhancing progress for students and clients and feedback from families brings constant testimony to such progress. Some comments from 2024:

→ *A worry as a parent can be whether our young people will get the good care they would otherwise get at home. Staff and carers at Derwen College made sure that absolutely all areas were covered..... his medicine in a safe in his room, an epilepsy monitor attached to the bed, switches in his room to help him ask for help, Makaton trained staff to mention but a few things.*



→ *[Student] has truly thrived as a student at Derwen College! His time there has done for him exactly what we were hoping for. A major obstacle for him has always been his communication skills and with that his confidence. Having spent three years in a nurturing and inclusive environment, he is now a confident young man, happy to chat with people using his voice.*

He has learnt that using his charm and winning personality to start interacting with people is a great superpower. [Student]'s independence has grown immeasurably by simply being exposed to a great variety of experiences in a supportive setting.

→ *The start of his college career was tough for [student]. He had previously not been able to access much respite and it took lots of encouragement and support for him to realise that it was actually pretty ok at college. The Juniper Court staff and other students were amazing at supporting him and made him feel safe and start to enjoy his time there to the fullest.*

He has loved the social aspect of being a residential student, learnt to take responsibility for his laundry and tidiness, enjoyed helping others, has made lots of friendships, worked hard, and thrived on succeeding in his tasks.



→ *The three years at Derwen College, with all its experiences, has set him up for a great adult life living to his potential as independently as possible.
-Parent of student leaving Derwen.*

- ➔ *Thank you for arranging [prospective student]'s transition day, she really enjoyed it. It has made a huge difference on how she is feeling and is now looking forward to September so much. It was lovely to meet her key worker. She is great and they got on so well.*
–Parent of student starting in September



- ➔ *Thank you so much for a wonderful show on Friday. We were there with extended family and we all thoroughly enjoyed it! It was such achievement for all the students, [student] and everyone looked like they were having so much fun and thanks to you and the team's hard work it was a great success. [Student] is already looking forward to the next one (as we are!)*
–Parent of current student
- ➔ *I just wanted to let you know how fabulous the staff were with [student] when I dropped him off yesterday evening. He was pretty upset, but the staff rallied to make him feel at home. I was grateful for their support as [student] has separation anxiety when I bring him over, and it can be pretty tricky for him.*
–Parent of current student
- ➔ *Rest assured, speaking as a parent of a former student, you will not regret choosing Derwen College for your young person. It was the best experience one could hope for*
–Parent of former student. Comment on Facebook








Development projects

Change and innovation are constant and the Resources and Business Committee leads on the in-depth consideration of development proposals and the monitoring of progress.

A **capital expenditure plan** is agreed annually. In 2023, a major consideration was the further adaptation of buildings to ensure the best possible environment for students on the Nurture programme. This has continued and includes provision for the expanded programme, Nurture 2. In 2023–24, we saw the first intake of residential Nurture students. This and the continued upgrade of the Agnes Hunt Village properties, which provide student and client accommodation, are the most costly projects.

The Commercial Outlet Strategy is kept under review. This ensures that commercial initiatives are in line with curriculum needs, industry standards and students' individual needs and aspirations.

The strategy encompasses all outlets that offer an opportunity for the Charity to generate a commercial income, both on- and off-site. Derwen College as a destination provides:

-  Garden Centre & Gift Shop
-  Walled Garden Café
-  Vintage Advantage Charity Shop
-  Ebay and online shop
-  The Orangery Restaurant
-  Woodland Walk
-  Station Café





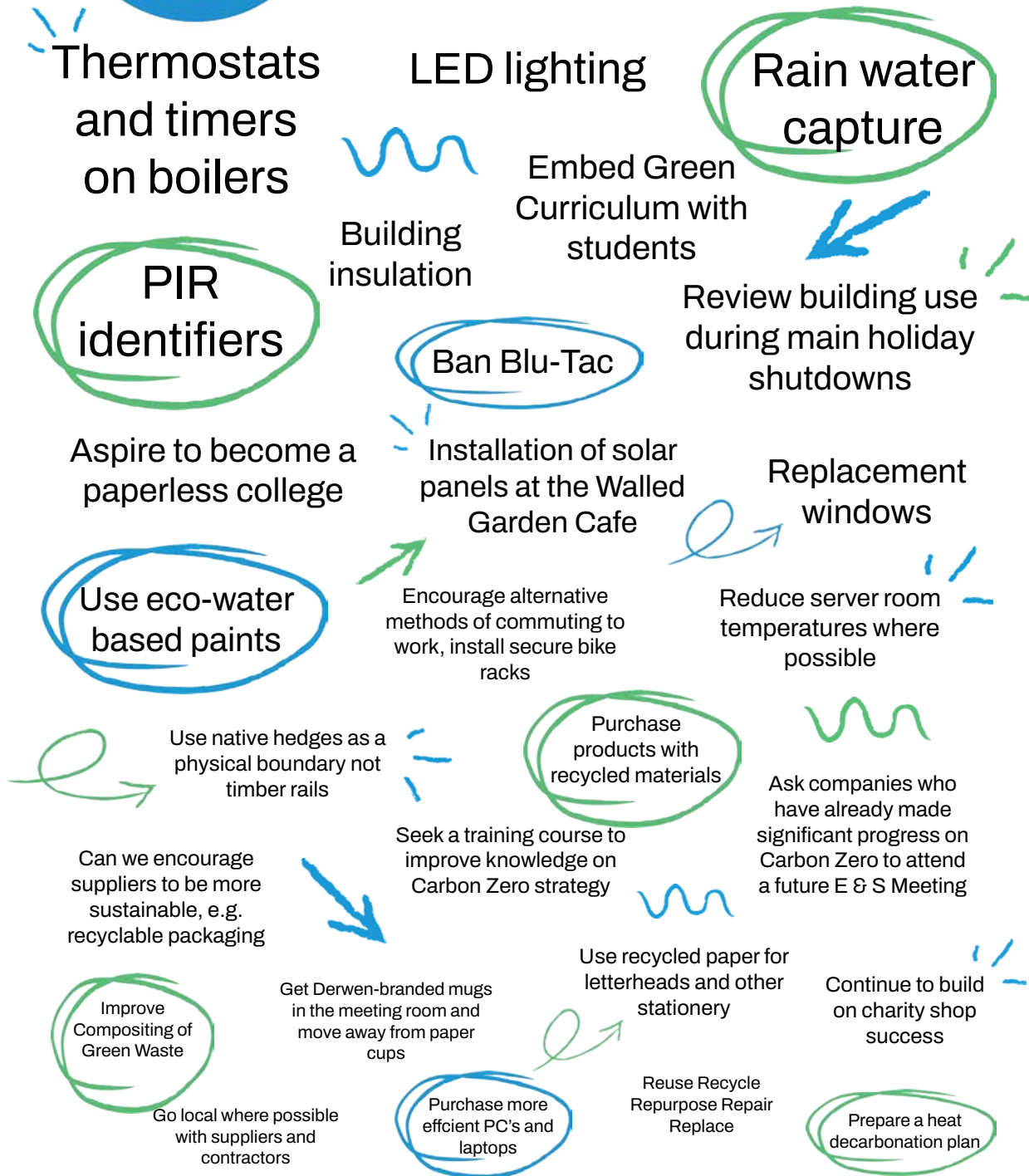
The Student Union Board (renamed the Student Council in autumn 2024) raised questions about the accessibility of some parts of the site, and, starting with Horticulture and the Student Union building, have worked with relevant staff to identify issues and improvements. From this starting point, the work has developed and there is now a comprehensive, cross-college Accessibility Action Plan for the next three years.

In December 2021, the staff **Environmental & Green Sustainability Committee** (with trustee membership) was formed. The Board supported the College commitment to the Shropshire Zero Carbon pledge. The group's objectives and aims are agreed, members received Carbon Literacy training, and a detailed Reduction of Carbon Footprint Action Plan was costed, agreed, and is regularly monitored.

The plan captures both large and small initiatives. The larger projects (for example the way the College heats its buildings) by their very nature have significant financial implications and are considered as part of the overall capital expenditure budget. How green issues and sustainability are being included in the curriculum has been reviewed.



What Derwen College have done so far to reduce our carbon footprint and become more GREEN



Green Skills in the Curriculum



Through May and June, a full evaluation of every building on the Gobowen campus was carried out, reporting a total value of just over £50 million.

Leadership, management and staffing



The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is headed by Meryl Green, the Principal and CEO, supported by five Directors and the following directorates:

- Finance and Sustainability
- ▼ People and Resources
- Care and Independence
- Learning and Curriculum Development
- Communication, Information and Technology. This Director is also the Company Secretary.

They have proved a committed and very able team, with whom trustees work particularly closely. They ensure quality, provide real vision, drive and challenge and are supported by highly competent senior managers and department heads.

Included in their responsibilities are safeguarding and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Safeguarding is embedded in all that happens and staff training closely monitored. Named trustees are members of the staff Safeguarding Committee and, before every

Standards and Effectiveness Committee meeting, they undertake a detailed review, with relevant staff, of current preoccupations, concerns, activity and reports. These are discussed at the Standards and Effectiveness Committee and reported to every board meeting.

Staff numbers continue to increase, reflecting the new and expanded provision and the increasing complexity of students' disabilities. Nationally, the labour market for colleges has become much tighter but Derwen College has yet to experience the critical recruitment difficulties many are experiencing. The 2024 staff engagement survey, conducted in the summer, produced an overall engagement score of 87%, compared to 76% in 2022. The Leadership Team is now working with senior managers to conduct focus groups to inform the development of a Colleague Engagement Action Plan for 2024–25.



Continued professional development is closely monitored and any low completion rates are actively followed up. Trustees have been pleased to see the continually increasing staff wellbeing facilities and programme. Employees are consulted on issues of concern to them by means of the Staff Forum, staff meetings and a confidential and anonymous intranet link. They are kept informed on specific matters directly by management and through the weekly Staff Newsletter.

Volunteers are welcomed, contribute to Derwen College's operation, receive an induction process and are DBS checked. In accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy, Derwen College has long established fair employment practices in the recruitment, selection, retention and training of disabled staff.

Governance

The development of the Charity

Derwen College Charity has a long pedigree. It was founded in 1927 by Dame Agnes Hunt and was originally associated with the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen. The Derwen Estate was purchased in 1928 and the first trust deed was established on 3 August 1932. It was varied or affected by schemes of the Charity Commission dated 25 January 1968 and 18 August 1972, and then consolidated in the Deed of 29 November 1988.

An incorporated charity was established on 18 July 2013, Derwen College (charity number 1153280, Companies House number 8615826). The former charity remains in existence as Derwen College Trust (charity number 208745) with the sole purpose of managing the permanently endowed property. It appointed as its trustees the new Derwen College Charity.



The solicitors drew up a uniting directive which allows a single set of accounts to be drawn up, as the two entities have the same financial reporting period. 'Linked' financial statements for both Companies House and the Charity Commission are submitted annually for reporting purposes.

The regulatory framework

Under the agreed Articles of Association, to which Derwen College is now working, there are:




at least seven and not more than twelve co-opted trustees, appointed by resolution of the Board conforming to any criteria the Board determines. The term of office of all trustees is five years, with an expectation that usually after three terms of office the trustee shall be eligible for re-election only after a year has elapsed.

The Board co-opts additional members to committees in order to benefit from people's experience and professional expertise.

Trustees' activity in 2024

The Board adopted the Charity Code of Governance, for larger charities, adheres to its principles, and monitors all aspects of its performance against the Code. It has developed a very positive working relationship with the Senior Leadership Team, which recognises the need for trustees to provide effective challenge as well as active support.

Board of Trustees









Louise Burns



Barbara Court



Mick Cowan




Vicki Cox



Paul Evison







Andy Grove




Kathleen 'K' Kimber



Liz Leigh



Mark Lord



Jamie Ward







Paul Crosby



Barry Langfield



Abi Plowden



Helen Smith



In recent years, and particularly for the last two, reflection on the procedures and processes adopted for strategic planning and monitoring has led to more detailed consideration of the external factors influencing Derwen College and the context within which it works. The strategic priorities underpin agenda items and decision making, and trustees maintain their primary commitment to ensuring that the beneficiaries of the Charity, and their wellbeing, are the focus of discussion and activity.

Much of the detailed analysis and scrutiny of the College's operation is managed by the Board's committees, of which there are four. The Resources and Business Committee was formed in the summer 2020 drawing together work previously undertaken by the Business and Finance, Estates, and Human Resources Committees.

A new committee was formed at that time, Audit and Risk Assurance, that undertakes work across the whole College's operation. The Standards and Effectiveness Committee continues its focus on care and the curriculum, with a specific brief for safeguarding and reporting on this at each board meeting. The Search and Governance Committee monitors the profile of the Board and the quality of governance.

All committees were busy and offered detailed scrutiny of plans and proposals and monitored progress across a wide range of Derwen College's services and activities. Reports and papers for meetings continued to be honed and improved; the focus has to be on analysis and reflection, with opportunities and issues clearly identified and options presented.

The work of all the committees is drawn together at the Board meetings, and committee papers are made available online to all trustees. Nevertheless, it is not really possible for a trustee to claim to be fully informed, such is the complexity of the Charity, and its constant response to challenge and change!

Trustees give generously of their time, experience and expertise. This is not confined to meetings! Trustee Mark Lord's concert, at the Holroyd Community Theatre, took place again in the summer.

The concert featured Performing Arts students, with canapes and drinks served by Hospitality and Food students. Ticket sales and a raffle raised £2,000. Trustees offer their services for fundraising events and give of their time to visit all campus activities.



Financial management

A going concern

The audited and approved annual accounts are submitted by the due dates to both the Charity Commission and Companies House. After making all appropriate enquiries, very thorough consideration of draft budgets, and cash flow up to 2026, and having taken key strategic decisions, the trustees expect the Charity to have adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing financial statements. The sale of assets has had a significant positive effect and income from the KSH Project is being used for further development.

The achievement of public benefit

In setting objectives and planning for activities, the trustees have given due consideration to general guidance published by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit, including the guidance 'Public benefit: running a charity' (PB2).

Derwen College transforms lives. The number of students who proceed to Supported Living, progress in managing their medication, travel and healthy eating, clients' response to the meaningful activities programme, the amazing number who gain Duke of Edinburgh's Awards each year, the confidence shown in work placements, performances and encounters with the public, are all examples of significant development and growth.



The quality of provision is inspected by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and other agencies. The Board believes that Derwen College provides excellent value for money to the public purse and that student outcomes mean they can be less dependent on benefits throughout the rest of their lives. The high level of staff expertise and commitment are key factors in the success of the College's management of learning, student support and innovation.

It is also evident that, in meeting the specific complex needs of those with SEND from across the country, Derwen College represents very efficient and effective use of public money. Students need access to much specialist provision, and it often needs to be on hand every day and through the night.

It is only when sufficient numbers of students come together that employing specialist teachers, therapists, nurses, and care staff becomes achievable and cost effective. Smaller establishments are not able to recruit and retain staff in this way. In order to meet the commitment to post-16 students with significant and complex SEND, national specialist colleges are essential.



The management of principal risks and uncertainties

The trustees regularly examine the principal areas of Derwen College's operations and consider the major risks faced in each. There are established resources and review systems which, under normal conditions, should allow any risk to be managed to an acceptable level in the College's day to day operation.

Derwen College's risk management has two distinct tiers: strategic and operational. The operational level is reviewed on a 'real time' basis and deals with individual departments, beneficiaries and staff, functions and duties. At the strategic level, the Senior Leadership Team reviews the risk assessment register monthly and it is reviewed at least termly as part of the College Quality Improvement Plan.

They are scrutinised at every Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting. Issues are debated and reported to board meetings. This includes College pension arrangements, insurances and trustee responsibilities to ensure these remain in line with current legislation and operational factors.

Derwen College's spacious campus is generally open to visitors and customers in the public areas, Derwen Marketplace, and is imaginatively and purposefully managed to enable students to interact with staff and members of the public appropriately and safely. However, the open plan nature of the campus and the heightened staff awareness of potential hazards necessitate regular reviews.

Gates were erected at strategic points on the campus enabling a secure area for students, away from the public areas, to be closed off at 9pm each evening. The central area of the College is pedestrianised. Departmental operational risk management encompasses all locations and individuals.



There has been an ongoing major installation of CCTV monitoring equipment, the replacement of intruder alarms, and significant upgrading of pathways. In 2023, the College began a trial of an acoustic monitoring system in student bedrooms, to allow for ongoing monitoring of student safety whilst minimising interruptions of their sleep. The successful pilot has led to the system being rolled out across more residences, and continues into 2025.

Site safety is reviewed through the Health and Safety Committee, which includes trustee membership, is audited by specialist advisors and monitored by external agencies. A full time Health and Safety Manager ensures the scrutiny of all aspects of Health and Safety and appropriate action plans are rigorously implemented.

Derwen College provides a safe and supportive environment for learners to access the internet, including social networking sites. Staff give a high priority to all aspects of online safety and the safeguarding team rigorously monitor risk in this area with personalised strategies being implemented to support all individuals as appropriate.

Fundraising

- Donations: £238,020
- The Vintage Advantage Shop: £132,754
- Summer Fete, Sponsored Walk and Christmas Fayre: £19,078
- Spinathon: £6,606
- Movement for Good: £10,000 for the Nurture Programme

- The Freemasons and Rotary organisations continue to give generously to support the Duke of Edinburgh's Award activities.

- The High Sheriff of Shropshire, Mandy Thorn MBE, joined students, staff and volunteers at the beginning of the 24-hour fundraising Spinathon on 2 February.



- In the decade following the inception of Derwen College's Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, the Basil Houghton Memorial Trust has been with us at every step to support the work we do. This year, the Trust has given a further £10,000 to the Charity to help expand the programme, and improve our facilities.

- Funds received in 2023 were used to build a bespoke outdoor shelter for students and volunteers to enjoy. Learning for Life students have used the space and warm summer weather, for an outdoor yoga session.



■ In October, volunteers from British Gas came and built a traversing wall, which will help students with balance, coordination and agility, and improve their spatial and directional awareness.



Students have undertaken sponsored activities, and staff regularly donate their time and energy to raising funds to support Derwen Charity.

The trustees are committed to the necessary capital spending to maintain and enhance the College's facilities and to meet the legal and regulatory requirements. The further development and upgrading of the Agnes Hunt Village properties, and ongoing adaptations to meet the needs of our changing cohort remain top priorities.

Investment policy and performance

The College takes a prudent, low risk approach to investments, placing cash surpluses on deposit to attract a return, although this was not especially attractive when interest rates were very low. This is, principally, because the reserves may need to be utilised during the short to medium term for cash flow and for capital projects. The investment strategy of the Derwen College pension scheme has been the subject of a detailed review with very positive results and the scheme is formally reported on annually to the Board.

Where next?

National developments, and a change of government, continue to offer more unknowns and potential challenges. The Welsh Government's changes to Additional Learning Needs are making it harder for Welsh students to obtain funding. Devolution and the extension of mayoral-led combined authorities could have a significant impact on funding and attitudes to placing students. Qualifications and the qualification frameworks are under review, with consequences for pathways and programmes.

However, the College Senior Leadership Team actively takes every opportunity to contribute to the debate and influence outcomes. And we are looking ahead: planning has started for our one hundred year birthday celebrations in 2027.