

The College Merthyr Tydfil

Working in partnership with local
secondary schools

'Providing a comprehensive educational experience for all'





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Introduction from the Principal



Lisa Thomas
Principal & Chief
Executive at The College
Merthyr Tydfil

The following booklet provides a detailed overview on the College Merthyr Tydfil and highlights how we work with local secondary schools to ensure that all learners have the best educational experience possible and achieve their maximum potential.

The booklet provides examples of how, by working together, we are able to offer:

- A first class academic experience ensuring that all learners achieve their desired outcomes.
- An outstanding and unique range of extra-curricular academic and enrichment opportunities to enhance learners' education:
 - #Wednesday and similar initiatives
 - Revision sessions at the college
 - Visits to taster days and activities at the University of South Wales
 - Career pathway and Have A Go Events
 - Employer engagement events and activities
 - Seren Hub for more able and talented students
 - Educational trips and visits abroad and much more!
- Dedicated advice and guidance to help ensure they are choosing the right course to support their future career ambitions
- The best support possible to ensure a seamless transition from secondary school into the college.

I do so hope that you find this information useful and I look forward to supporting your son/daughter in both their transition into college and when they join us as a learner in September 2022.



Overview of college: successes and achievements

Accommodating over 2,500 learners, including 800 sixth form learners the college aims to make a real difference to education and training for learners in Merthyr Tydfil (and the wider Heads of Valleys region). The last few years have been exceptional for the college. Not only have we provided learners with the opportunity to study in a state of the art education environment; but we have been able to provide a much greater choice of post 16 qualifications available locally to learners here in Merthyr Tydfil – and it hasn't stopped there.

Since our opening in 2013, we have:

- Achieved fantastic academic results, including: A year on year improvement in A level pass rates making us one of the top performing FE college's and local authorities across the whole of Wales!
- Enhanced our partnerships with local secondary schools and hosted a number of successful transition events for prospective students, including open evenings, taster activities, Have A Go Events, Employer engagement projects and hosting the secondary school council conference.
- Received our best ever vocational results with many areas achieving a 100% pass rate
- Beenshortlisted for the Times Further Education 'FE College of the Year' Award
- Become recognised as a provider of outstanding pastoral support and care for our students:
- Received the prestigious Princess Royal Training Award in recognition for our commitment to outstanding teaching and learning
- Achieved excellent results for Learner Voice and NSS student surveys
- Developed our partnerships with local business and the community, including EE, Tesco, BBC Wales, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil Business Club, Tenneco Walker, Merthyr Tydfil secondary schools, Stephens and George Printing company, NHS, National Library of Wales and many more!
- Received the Microsoft Showcase Schools Incubator Award
- Improved progression onto higher education – with over 200A level and vocational students accepted on to degree programmes at leading universities across the UK, each year
- Supported learners to progress successfully into Oxford and Cambridge through our dedicated MAT Programme
- Supported high numbers of learners to progress successfully into employment and apprenticeships through our dedicated 'Future Pathways' Team
- Supported learners from across all college areas to take part in Welsh, UK and Worldskills competitions to support the development of their work ready and employability skills

But it doesn't stop there! During 2021-2022 we aim to build upon these successes further, providing a first class teaching and learning experience, together with excellent student support and enrichment activities to ensure that all of our learners achieve their maximum potential and gain the skills and qualifications required to progress on to University or employment.



About us

The College Merthyr Tydfil is a state of the art tertiary college delivering education and training from post-16 A levels and vocational courses through to university-level and professional qualifications, including Foundation Degrees, AAT and PGCE. The college has a main college campus together with leased accommodation in the specialist Creative Industries Centre - REDHOUSE (The Old Town Hall).

The College has approximately 2,800 students and employs just over 300 staff. Despite being one of the smallest tertiary colleges in Wales, the College has achieved unprecedented success over the last few years, achieving over and above our recruitment targets for the last three years, raising participation levels in education and contributing to a substantial decrease in the number of 16 year old NEETS in Merthyr Tydfil.

New performance measures introduced by the Welsh Government for FE and school sixth forms showcase that the college performed above the national average across a range of vocational levels and across many A level indicators during 2018/19. Unpublished data for 2019/20 supports a continual trend in year on year improvement in college outcomes.

The outcomes of our recent Learner Voice Survey illustrate that 86% of further education learners were satisfied with their experience at college during 2019-2020 and our NSS satisfaction scores are also consistently high with 79% of HE learners satisfied with their experience on our foundation and top-up degrees.

The College has developed an excellent reputation locally and regionally with school teachers, learners, parents and employers demonstrating a significant level of trust in the College and a desire to want to engage and become part of the College. This has been evidenced through increased recruitment not just from the Merthyr Tydfil area, but also from Brecon, Rhymney and Rhondda Cynon Taf. The College is increasingly being seen as the vocational and A level centre of choice for learners from these areas and by 2023 we aim to be recognised as an A level Centre of Excellence with vocational centres of excellence in Creative and Digital Industries, Engineering and Performing Arts.

The College has fantastic partnership links with local schools, with just under 90% of the year 11 pupils progressing to the college each year. This is further enhanced through a comprehensive school transition programme, including taster days, open evenings, attendance at year 11 assemblies and parents evenings, and school based subject talks.

The college's relationship with local employers has gone from strength to strength, with new joint programmes established, including an engineering apprenticeship programme with General Dynamics and the development of the Welsh Valleys Engineering Project designed to embed sustainable, systemic change in engineering education in South Wales.

The college has identified a number of new academic and vocational routes and pathways into advanced manufacturing and other key regional priority areas to be taken forward over the next three to four years to contribute and support the priorities outlined within the Regional Skills and Employment Plan. In addition, the college has been fortunate to be part of a ground breaking new 'Partnership in Innovation and Engagement' working alongside the other FE colleges and HE institutions in South East Wales to take forward industry collaboration, skills and training in key strategic sector priority areas, including Compound Semi-conductor, Design and Creative Industries. As part of these developments, new modules in automation, photonics and robotics have been integrated into the college's existing BTEC Level 3 Engineering. New courses have also been introduced in Graphic Design, Creative Computing, E-Sports and Games Design.

The outcomes of an external teaching and learning review undertaken in November 2018, highlighted that teaching and learning across the college is good. Moreover, the review identified a number of areas of best practice, highlighting the excellent work going on across divisions on learner engagement, challenge and pace, effective questioning, skills development and assessment of and for learning.

In 2016 the College teamed up with OLEVI to become the first college in Wales to have staff trained in its Outstanding Teacher Programme. This programme has gone from strength to strength and the college is the only FE College in the UK to be an accredited OLEVI hub for delivery of the Outstanding Teacher Programme.

External recognition is really important for the College – it not only reinforces the good practice being undertaken but it also enables the College to move to the next level. Over the last few years the College has been pleased to see its efforts and successes recognised and rewarded through a number of external accolades and prizes. including being shortlisted for the Times Further Education College of the Year Award 2020.

Despite these many achievements, senior management and staff recognise that the college has to keep changing and developing to keep doing the best it possibly can - only the best will do for learners and it's important that they get what they deserve.

Our Vision, Mission & Values



The key aim of the college is to transform education and training for 16+ learners in Merthyr Tydfil and the wider Heads of Valleys region through the provision of a greater choice of learning and training pathways aimed at a much wider section of the community and delivered by employing innovative teaching methodologies.

What can the college offer your son/daughter?

- Local access to a wide range of relevant learning and training pathways
- Comprehensive range of A Levels and post 16 vocational qualifications to choose from - all delivered by high quality and experienced teaching staff
- Outstanding mental health, wellbeing, additional learning needs and pastoral support
- Challenging programme for high aspiring and MAT students, including Oxbridge and Cambridge visits and lectures and links to the SEREN Hub
- Excellent transport links with short travel times
- Opportunity to study at one of the top performing FE colleges in Wales, which was shortlisted for the TES FE College of the Year Award in 2020
- State of the art facilities - evident through our recent Microsoft Showcase Schools Incubator status
- Best progression rates to higher education across all post-16 providers in Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Fantastic programme of enrichment, social, enterprise and recreational activities, including Sports Academies, Duke of Edinburgh, Enterprise Challenges Healthcare Academy and much more!
- New for 2021 - access to a brand new Golf Academy, supported by Golf Wales and Neil Matthews
- Access to a range of apprenticeships and trainee programmes all delivered in conjunction with local employers and organisations, including the Merthyr Tydfil Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme
- Excellent progression pathways to university and employment
- Opportunity to study in specialist performing arts, media and music facilities at the REDHOUSE (The Old Town Hall)
- Vibrant Learner Senedd to enable them to contribute their views to the development and operation of the college
- Opportunity to become a Learner Ambassador
- Opportunity to participate in the Welsh Valleys Engineering Partnership project and associated employer engagement activities
- A range of bursaries, scholarships and financial incentives to support their time at college

Learner Voice Survey 2021 Student Comments

"I like the way that the teachers are open and easy to communicate with when I need help"

"The support that is available is excellent. The tutors are very approachable and teach you with respect"

"I like that the college gives you the chance to be more independent"

"I really enjoy the vast range of extra-curricula activities available"

"It is a lovely building with up to date equipment and facilities"

"I like the building and the modern facilities"

Working in partnership with secondary schools

The college works closely with local schools to ensure that all pupils have access to the best educational experience possible and that they have a seamless transition from year 11 into the college. Here are some of the activities that we have undertaken and offered over the last few years:



Project Aspire

Project Aspire, which was run by Afon Taf High school in partnership with The College Merthyr Tydfil, aims to provide an opportunity for more able and talented year six pupils to participate in a range of stretching academic, team building and enrichment activities to assist them in their transition from primary to secondary school whilst inspiring them to want to do well in school and progress on to A levels or further education at the college.

Over 35 year 6 school pupils attended an exciting and innovative week of workshops and activities as part of this Project Aspire programme.

Based around the Science, Engineering and Technology (STEM) theme, the 35 pupils, from primary schools in the Afon Taf cluster area, had the opportunity to attend The College Merthyr Tydfil and take part in a number of science, robotics, computer gaming, technology and engineering workshops and activities, all of which were run and organised jointly by The College Merthyr Tydfil and Afon Taf staff.

At the end of the week, a 'Project Aspire Graduation Ceremony' was held to reward the pupils for their hard work. Speaking at the Graduation Ceremony, Stephen Baber, Deputy Headteacher, Afon Taf High School commented,

"The Project Aspire week was a tremendous success.

We developed the project to help year six pupils in their transition from primary to secondary school and to also encourage and inspire them to see the types of subjects and activities that they will have the opportunity to study and participate in at Afon Taf High School.

We have been very pleased to have the support of The College Merthyr Tydfil to showcase the educational opportunities that exist beyond year 11 in Merthyr Tydfil. The College has fantastic facilities and great teachers and we hope that this type of partnership working will inspire our pupils to progress on to further and higher education at the college."

#Wednesday

In September 2015, Afon Taf High School and The College Merthyr Tydfil launched an exciting Wednesday afternoon enrichment programme called '#Wednesday'. Providing a range of activities from sport, music, drama, science through to enterprise and money management, this programme is offered to all year six and seven pupils and is delivered jointly through Afon Taf and The College Merthyr Tydfil staff.

In addition, the college works closely with all secondary schools in the following ways:

- Hosting Year 11 Information Evenings at the school - during early September of each year
- Presenting information on course options at Year 9 Options Evenings.
- Holding Career Pathway Events for all year 9, 10 and 11 pupils
- Hosting dedicated Have A Go and employer engagement activities and workshops for year 9, 10 and 11 pupils
- College presence at all Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11 Parents'/Carers' Evenings to answer any questions parents may have.

- Offering a programme for More Able and Talented students which involves college learners going back into schools to coach/mentor Year 11 pupils.
- Offering a comprehensive programme of revision sessions for Year 11 pupils.
- Organising year 10 taster days each year
- Jointly offering enrichment programmes for Year 6 and 7 pupils from across all secondary schools, using the Afon Taf Aspire project and #Wednesday projects as examples of good practice.
- Using College Ambassadors to go back into schools to work with year 10 and year 11 pupils.
- College Learner Senedd representatives attending School Council meetings to allow pupils to ask any questions they may have open and freely.
- Providing a 'Guide to starting at college' for Year 11 pupils.
- Running a 14-16 pathways programme for those year 10 and 11 learners wishing to study a vocational pathway alongside their GCSEs



Year 10 learners enjoying a STEM Taster Day

Life at The College Merthyr Tydfil



Our campus and facilities

Learners studying at The College Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity to study in our main college building, the Technology Centre or the unique creative industries facilities at REDHOUSE.

Courses on offer

We currently offer over 100 different further and higher education courses, including a comprehensive portfolio of 30 A levels. Full details of all the courses on offer can be found at www.merthyr.ac.uk or in our Course Guide for 2022-2023..

College Success Rates

The college offers a first class teaching and learning experience to all of our learners – something which is evident through our continually improving quality ratings and examination results.

Open Evenings during 2021-2022

Tuesday 9th November 2021
Monday 17th January 2022
Wednesday 9th March 2022
Thursday 12th May 2022

2021 Results

Reinforcing its position as one of the top colleges in Wales, the college achieved an overall A Level pass rate (A*-E) of 99%, with 41% of the students achieving the very highest A*-A grades.

With a fierce commitment to improving the quality and overall experience of teaching and learning, the percentage of learners achieving A*-C grades also increased to 86% this year – up 4% from 2020, and 12% compared to 2019.

Vocational learners added to this success, with a record number of top grades awarded across the board.

Progression to University and Employment

Not only do we work hard to maximise our student's achievements but we also work hard to encourage all students to achieve the very best they can – whether that is further or higher study or employment. –

University and Employment Destinations 2021-

Overleaf you will find details of some of the past learners from your son/daughter's secondary school, what they achieved at the college and where they have now progressed to.

Student Case Studies

Here's a snapshot of some past students that have progressed on to the college and the successes they have achieved.

"Despite the challenges of online learning over the past year, the College has supported us to improve our working grades by keeping learning as interactive and engaging as possible. Without the encouragement of the Business department, I couldn't have secured a place at Exeter University to study Marketing and Management."

Maidie Hope-Davies
A Level student
The College Merthyr Tydfil
Afon Taf alumni



"I'm overwhelmed by the support I've had since studying at the College. Any worries or issues I have, a member of staff is always on hand to offer advice. As a Travel and Tourism student, the staff have motivated me to develop my career within the industry and I hope to work abroad after completing my course."

Ethan Scriven
Level 3 Travel and Tourism student
The College Merthyr Tydfil
Pen y Dre High School alumni



"I've really enjoyed my time so far at The College Merthyr Tydfil. I've really appreciated the access to learning support, which has allowed me to thrive academically, whilst also developing my personal skills."

Tomos Moran
Level 3 Public Services student
The College Merthyr Tydfil
Bishop Hedley alumni



"From writing my personal statement to the interview Process for Cambridge University, I've been inundated with help And support from the College every step of the way. I'm especially grateful to Nicola and the Psychology department who believed I could do it when I doubted myself and for mentoring me throughout the whole process I couldn't be happier"

MacKenzie Vinnicombe
A level Student
The College Merthyr Tydfil
Cyfarthfa High School alumni





Outstanding Mental Health, Wellbeing, Additional Learning Needs and Pastoral Support

The college has a very caring culture and our staff are committed to ensuring that all of our learners receive the right level of care, support and guidance during their time with us. We have a designated one stop 'Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing department, situated on the first floor. This provides a first point of contact for learners to seek advice on any questions, queries, concerns they may have or any information they request. Our team of Advisors offer key support and guidance on the following:

- Learning Coach and Universal Support Team
- Additional Learning Needs Support
- Inspire to Achieve (I2A)
- Equality and Diversity
- Careers Advice and Guidance
- Work Experience
- Counselling Service
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Chaplaincy

In addition, all learners have a personal/course tutor who will act as a point of reference in all matters concerning their personal, social and academic welfare and subject areas they are studying. These tutors will also help them with important issues such as study skills, career guidance, selecting university courses and health issues. They will meet with your personal tutor on a weekly basis.

More Able and Talented

We have a unique programme for more able and talented students which provides stretching and challenging term-time and summer school activities linked to Oxford, Cambridge and other UK and international universities.

As an outcome of this programme, we currently have a number of students applying to study and being successfully accepted into universities like Penn University, Harvard University, Oxford and Cambridge.

What's more we also work very closely the Welsh Government to be part of the Oxbridge Hub 'Seren' for South Wales.



To give you a flavour of some of the more able and talented activities available to our students, over the past few years, Humanities learner Niamh Winstone achieved an A* in Law, A* in History and an A in Drama and Theatre studies. Niamh has now progressed on to study a Law Degree at Cardiff University.



Our commitment to learners

We recognise that choosing a college or future provider for your son/daughter can be quite daunting. We can assure you that, if you do decide to send your son/daughter to the college, we will provide them with:

- High quality, distinctive and relevant learning opportunities that inspire the pursuit of academic excellence
- Creative and engaging teaching from high quality academic staff
- An unrivalled learning experience that addresses all of their needs and aspirations
- Opportunity to be part of our Learner Senedd and engage in college decision-making
- State of the art learning facilities and environments
- Professional, approachable and friendly learner support
- Challenging and stimulating programme of enrichment activities

Equally we will work with you and your son/daughter throughout their time at their secondary school to advise them on which programme is best suited for their current skills and abilities. We continually review our entry standards for all courses to make sure that learners are only admitted to courses where they will have a good chance of success.

Our commitment to parents

Like secondary schools, we welcome the involvement of parents and will work with you to ensure that your son/daughter achieves their maximum potential. The reason for this is that we know that the students who perform best are those who do three things:

- Work hard
- Are supported and taught by high quality and committed teachers
- Are supported and encouraged by parents

Therefore, we will ensure that parents:

- Play a full role in the partnership between your son/daughter and the college
- Have an opportunity to come in at the beginning of term to meet your son's/daughter's tutors
- Are informed straight away about any instances of non-attendance
- Receive comprehensive, accurate and timely information from the college throughout the duration of their chosen course of study, including college newsletters
- Receive progress reports on your son/daughter twice yearly
- Attend a parents/carers evening twice yearly to discuss your son/daughter's performance

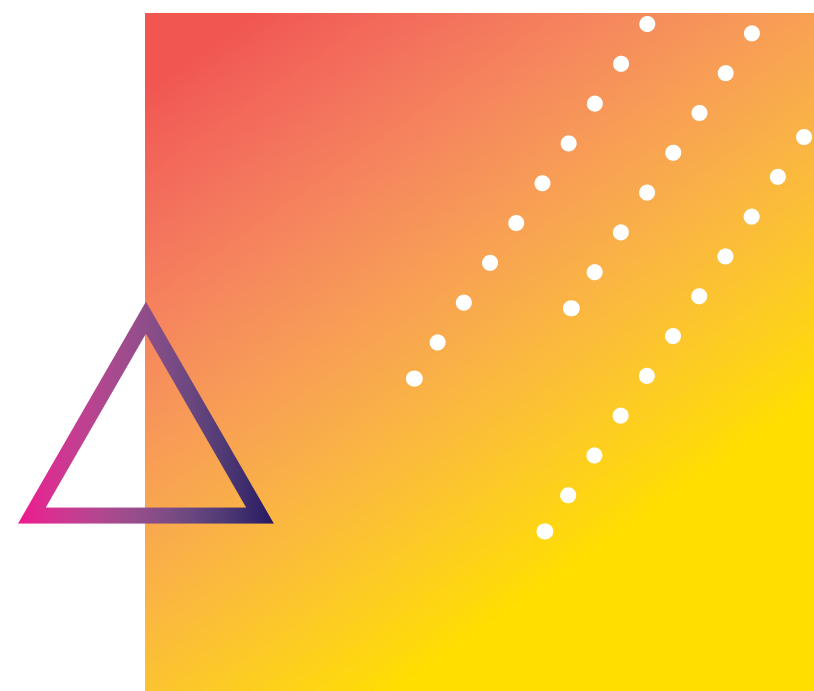
Outcomes of our Parental Survey – 2020

The results of our 2020 parental survey² illustrate that 97% of parents are satisfied with their son/daughter's experience and progress at college. Some of the comments received, include:

"Gavin Davies is an excellent tutor and motivates his students."

"My daughter enjoys attending college and feels she is doing well"

"Overall excellent"





Transition Process

Finally, the partnership work that we do with Afon Taf highlights our commitment to ensuring that the transition from school to college is as smooth as possible through all of the activities and information events on offer.

In addition, we have a range of documents, guides and information mechanisms to ensure that potential students get all of the information, help and guidance they need. These include:

- **Website query form:** visit our website query form to submit any questions you would like to ask us. We promise to respond within 24 hours.
- **Facebook and Twitter:** follow us on Facebook and Twitter to keep up to date on all of our college news
- **Year 11 School Leavers Guide:** visit our website to find out more information at merthyr.ac.uk
- **Parents/Carers Advice and Guidance:** visit the Parents/Carers section of our Website for all of the necessary information you need on college life merthyr.ac.uk/en/information-for-parents-carers

Important contact details:

 @CollegeMerthyr  collegemerthtydfil

Student Support on **FREEPHONE: 0800 1693825**

College information email address: www.collegeinfo@merthyr.ac.uk

College Reception: **01685 726000**



@CollegeMerthyr



collegemerthirtydfil

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