

Dear Ms Neagle,

**National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee:  
Inquiry into the range of Education Otherwise that at School (EOTAS) provision**

ColegauCymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into the range of Education Otherwise that at School (EOTAS) provision. ColegauCymru is a post-compulsory education charity, representing the thirteen further education (FE) colleges and FE institutions in Wales. We promote the public benefit of post compulsory education and learning.

We would like to highlight the role of Further Education Institutions in supporting EOTAS, in addition to work undertaken with young people who attend college for part of their education, alongside part attendance in school.

Cardiff and Vale College's (CAVC) Junior Apprenticeship programme was the first programme of its kind in Wales for 14-16 year olds and has operated for over four years. It is designed for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils and provides a range of vocational pathways in line with key priority sectors set out by Regional Skills Partnerships and the Welsh Government. Qualifications include vocational units at Level 1 (=2 x GCSEs D-G) or Level 2 (=2 x GCSEs A-C) as well as GCSE English, Maths, Numeracy & Financial Capability. Junior Apprenticeships at CAVC include a weekly tutorial session focussed on progress, attendance & targets, work experience opportunities, a bespoke mentor programme and a robust Year 11 progression programme. Weekly Welsh support sessions are provided for learners from Welsh Medium schools to help with theory work and assessments. Since 2017, 107 Junior Apprentices have graduated from



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the programme, with the majority going on to study on post 16 programmes, apprenticeships or employment. Eight EOTAS learners have successfully progressed on to post 16 courses.

The vocational qualifications include: VTCT Hair & Beauty Skills Level 2; WJEC Construction Skills Level 1 /2; IMI Vehicle Inspection level 2; C&G Hospitality and Catering Level 2; BTEC Team work and Community Level 2 (Public Services). Key considerations for the programme are the need for pupil buy-in and passion for subject area; involvement from all stakeholders – pupils, parents, school, local authority, other support agencies and CAVC; engagement in transition activities crucial to success. Comprehensive referral information is required to ensure the right pathway is identified and that relevant support is put in place. Young people benefit from the fact that the college environment significantly different to schools.

A number of other colleges (but not all) now operate Junior Apprenticeship schemes, including Merthyr, Neath Port Talbot Group of Colleges, Bridgend and Cambria. Areas covered include construction, public services, motor vehicles, landscaping, hospitality and catering, and hair and beauty. Following consultation with schools, the Gower College Swansea scheme is named the “Junior Academy Programme”. Exact participation numbers vary across colleges.

Despite the issue of parity of esteem being raised frequently in relation to vocational and academic routes, colleges report that many of the learners who become Junior Apprentices are those who struggle in school with poor attendance, are those that schools do not wish to retain, or who are not suited to the school environment. However, ideally, the Junior Apprenticeship should equally be a route for those young people who simply have clear ideas about career areas that they wish to pursue from a young age. Gower College Swansea highlight that constant communication and trust with schools has been key to their Junior Academy programme operating successfully.

In addition to Junior Apprenticeships, colleges also link with schools to offer part time opportunities to young people of compulsory school age. For example, Coleg Cambria has over 1,000 students on school link programmes who attend college weekly for two years, usually for half a day per week for most programmes. Pembrokeshire College has a group of 14-16 year old engineering students from multiple feeder schools who attend for one day per week over two years.

Other initiatives which include the area of EOTAS provision are based more on digital technology. For example, Pembrokeshire College also offers an online distance learning provision and an online school with live classes in real time that learners may join from anywhere. Their main provision is GCSEs and A levels.

LearnOnline has approximately 400 enrolments and learners are made up predominantly of Home Educated or Adult learners. Around 10 per cent of the learners are accessing the provision under the EOTAS umbrella where a school or Local Authority (LA) fund Pembrokeshire College to deliver the provision which the authority is unable to provide itself. Pembrokeshire

County Council recently began to refer learners to the College, which is now receiving a much higher volume of enquiries directly from “local” learners and families.

LiveSchool at Pembrokeshire College has approximately 90 enrolments and is quite similar to learning in today’s technology enhanced classrooms, with learners viewing the electronic white board and listening to the teacher. LiveSchool is predominantly accessed by Home Educated (c. 40%) and EOTAS learners (c. 40%) with Adult Learners (c. 20%) being the smaller percentage of the cohort.

Local authorities and schools find the Pembrokeshire College provision by searching online when they have identified a need that they cannot satisfy from their conventional solutions: for instance, a learner that is unable to attend school for health reasons, or studying a subject that the local authority cannot easily accommodate, like Computer Science at GCSE or A level. Pembrokeshire College reports that this provision is best suited to more disciplined learners.

ColegauCymru is keen to ensure that EOTAS provision through the medium of Welsh is taken into account as part of the Committee’s inquiry. Many learners in EOTAS provision are potentially vulnerable and being able to access education and other services through the language of choice is vital.

ColegauCymru would be happy to meet the Committee to discuss these issues in more detail.