

# Derwen<sup>!</sup> College

## Trustees' Reflections 2022



'Just because we're different,  
it doesn't define us.'

Amy



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 2022

- △ Kathleen Kimber – Chair and Chair of Search and Governance
- △ Mark Lord – Vice-Chair
- △ Lucy Beaumont
- △ Louise Burns – Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance
- △ Barbara Court – Vice-Chair of Business and Resources
- △ Michael Cowan – Chair of Standards and Effectiveness
- △ Vicki Cox – Vice-Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance
- △ Paul Crosby
- △ Paul Evison
- △ Elizabeth Leigh – Vice-Chair of Standards and Effectiveness
- △ Helen Smith
- △ Jamie Ward – Chair of Business and Resources
  
- △ Carol Thompson – Clerk and Company Secretary

We place on record our sincere thanks to all trustees and co-opted committee members who have given generously of their time and constructively of their experience and wisdom. We are delighted that in 2022 face-to-face meetings became possible once more and Board members were able to begin to resume their familiarity with the College, its students, clients and staff.

Much information about the charity, its activities and endeavours is to be found on the website: [www.derwen.ac.uk](http://www.derwen.ac.uk)



## The College's Mission, Strategic Priorities and Values

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

### Strategic Priorities:

#### **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

- △ Our holistic approach to people
- △ Quality assurance
- △ 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

## The College's Values:



## 2022

### The year when public recognition continued

In 2021 we had been proud of the awards gained, amongst which were:

- △ Tes (Times Educational Supplement): FE Specialist Provider of the Year
- △ Pearson National Teaching Awards for Schools and Colleges: Excellence in Special Needs Education. Gold Award – Stephen Evans
- △ Pearson National Teaching Awards for Schools and Colleges: Digital Innovator of the Year category. Bronze Award – Jessie Vaughan
- △ UK Career Development Award for Careers Programme in a Specialist School/College Winner
- △ The nasen Award for 16–25 Provision

### Significant new awards:

#### Adult Student of the Year – Amy Jude

There are some 1,700 adult further education students in England and each year the Association of Colleges recognises students who have excelled and gone above and beyond others. On 15 November, Amy was awarded Adult Student of the Year, an outstanding achievement. Amy was applauded for:

*her commitment, passion and sense of justice. During her time at the college, Amy became an impressive ambassador for people with learning difficulties and disabilities, for women and for all minorities.*

The Natspec Bulletin wrote:





*She is a bold and impressive young woman who has Optic Nerve Hypoplasia – resulting in multiple hormone deficiencies and a visual impairment, autism, hypersensitivity, learning difficulties and ARFID (food intake disorder). She is a force to be reckoned with.*

*During her time at College, she represented fellow students as President of the Student Union for two years' running. She was never afraid to raise issues with the senior leadership team and governors.*

*She also represented Derwen College at Natspec Student Parliament. She was part of the national gathering of student representatives from specialist colleges who come together to discuss and collaborate on issues that are important to them. At the 2022 Natspec Conference. Amy delivered the opening speech on the final day, speaking eloquently and with passion about what further education had meant for her.*

*These achievements are on top of Amy's studies and work experience as a Performing Arts student. She is a talented actress, who has embraced lead roles in the College's Christmas and Summer Shows, taken part in community performances and competitions, written and delivered moving monologues about inclusion, and inspired dancers of all ages while working at a local dance school.*

*Amy has risen to every challenge, never allowing disability to become a barrier to her ambitions.*

*Amy's mum Kirsten said "....at Derwen we saw her confidence soar. She has achieved so much, including her Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and now Adult Student of the Year. We are very proud that she's developed from that quiet and shy little girl to a young woman who can deliver a rousing speech or star performance."*

### **The Queen's Award for Enterprise – Promoting Opportunity category**

The College was one of only nine UK award winners in this category. It was based on the college's mission to educate, inspire and empower young adults to lead the lives they choose, with a focus

on the vocational skills and on-the-job training provided to enable many of them to access further training and employment back in their home areas.

The Queen's Award judges recognised the life-changing value of students learning in the customer-facing Marketplace – Garden Centre & Gift Shop, Walled Garden Cafe, The Orangery Restaurant, Hotel 751 and the Vintage Charity Shop, where students learn skills in an industry-standard environment.

The bid also recognised the College's work to build partnerships with local and national businesses, in areas which are relevant to the students' learning and desired employment outcomes, and our work with industry champions. Even the College's green credentials, customer and supplier relations, and students and staff wellbeing were examined as part of this extensive process.



### **Makaton Friendly**

Makaton is a language programme that combines signs, symbols and speech to provide multiple ways to enable people to communicate. Derwen College is the first specialist college to be awarded Makaton Silver Status, the highest Makaton charity accreditation.

Led by a team of six tutors, there has been a cross-college initiative of training, with 75% of student-facing staff needing to reach at least Level 2. More than 20% of staff have reached the advanced Level 4, and 10% have attended workshops in Makaton for Safeguarding, an area where clear communication is vitally important. The College's Head of Speech and Language, Julie Hawkins, is a senior tutor for Makaton and is also the symbols advisor for The Makaton Charity

### **The Autism Specialist Award**

The National Autistic Society Lead Assessor, Jonny Knowles, in presenting the official Autism Specialist Award certificate spoke of how much he had enjoyed working with the College for three years. He added, 'Having spent two days at Derwen College, even staying the night at the College's Hotel 751, I can say it is unique to anywhere I've seen. We were blown away by the unique offer you have here and person-centred aspirations for students.'

The development work was college-wide, combining expertise from the therapies team, nurses, teaching, sports and leisure, and care staff, as well as listening to the needs of the real experts – the students. The College is the only accredited centre in Shropshire.



### **SEND Awards 2022 – Winners in:**

- △ Inclusion in Higher and Further Education
- △ Support into Employment

### Natspec Award for 'Pathways into Employment'

Recognised how staff adapted and created work experience opportunities for students and interns, during the pandemic.

### AoC Beacon Awards

Commended the college in the Support for Students category.

## Snapshots of highlights and activities in 2022:

### January

- △ Four of our students were taking part in a study to investigate how eye shape can **effect** focusing and vision in people with Down's syndrome. Students volunteered for the optometry study by Aston University. [www.bit.ly/EyeStudyAston](http://www.bit.ly/EyeStudyAston)

### February

- △ The new sensory room for Nurture Students was completed. Nurture students, who have profound and multiple learning disabilities, are benefitting hugely from this new state-of-the-art provision. The room was designed by Premier Solutions, and offers a dedicated space for therapeutic development and sensory play. It features a vibrating plinth, light tube, projector and music, and is designed to give students maximum control of their surroundings.

### March

- △ The Student Union Board went to London, a visit which included a tour of the Houses of Parliament and the theatre.
- △ BBC children's news programme, *Newsround*, sent presenter Martin Dougan to visit the College to meet two Duke of Edinburgh's Gold award students for a feature to be broadcast on World Down's Syndrome Day.

### April

- △ The first Spinathon: sports teachers Sian Roberts and Steve Evans pedaled spin bikes for 24 hours, to raise funds for equipment. They were well supported for briefer periods by numerous colleagues, friends and students, raising nearly £8,000.
- △ The first three colonies of bees were installed and honey was being sold in July.

### May

- △ College won Initiative of the Year in the Aico Community Awards, for the creation of The Vintage Advantage, which provides work placements for students, interns and clients.
- △ 28 May – the first time traditional key events were put together: sponsored walk, fun run and Fete.





- △ Through the summer term – Derwen Dance Crew (DDC) performed at a West Midlands street dance competition, winning second place. Many of the students collected trophies for solo performances! The talented sign, song and dance group DOT (Derwen on Tour) gave several performances, including Gobowen School fete and Mark Lord's Charity Concert. They returned to Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, for the third time, as part of the Inclusion Project.

## June

- △ The Platinum Jubilee street party was a great success. The College looked splendid decked out in red, white and blue, and students enjoyed a barbecue, and were even treated to a visit from a uniformed Welsh Guard.
- △ The Summer Show, called 'Included', was performed to much acclaim. The audience of families, friends and VIPs, included Coronation Street and Waterloo Road actor Sam Retford, and a producer and writer from Hollyoaks. They have promised to look at opportunities to work together in the future. Principal Meryl Green said: 'The team didn't shy away from some hard-hitting themes and, to me, this was absolutely right for our college and our young adults. I enjoyed all the different scenes and thought that they were linked very cleverly with strong, relevant messages. The quality of dance and singing was also amazing.'

## July

- △ The first off-site prom, which was held at The Venue, and involved plenty of glamour, dancing, cake and mocktails.
- △ The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards: the success of 57 students were marked in a celebration which was attended by local dignitaries, families and DofE Awards officials. Students reflected on how they had been challenged by learning skills, volunteering, completing physical elements and undertaking an expedition.
- △ There was a Sports Day, prize giving and leaving parties across College.
- △ The Clients completed their moves into their supported living accommodation throughout the summer.

## October

- △ Autism Advisor, Helen Evans, delivered a presentation on research skills training for students at Natspec's Learner Voice Practitioner network meeting. The project, which is part of her ongoing PhD study, is the first of its kind to focus on students with SEND as researchers.

## November

- △ Walford's Leaf it to Us team were awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the Baschurch Parish Council for all the hard work that staff and students contributed to the Baschurch Community: roundabout, cemetery and local spots.

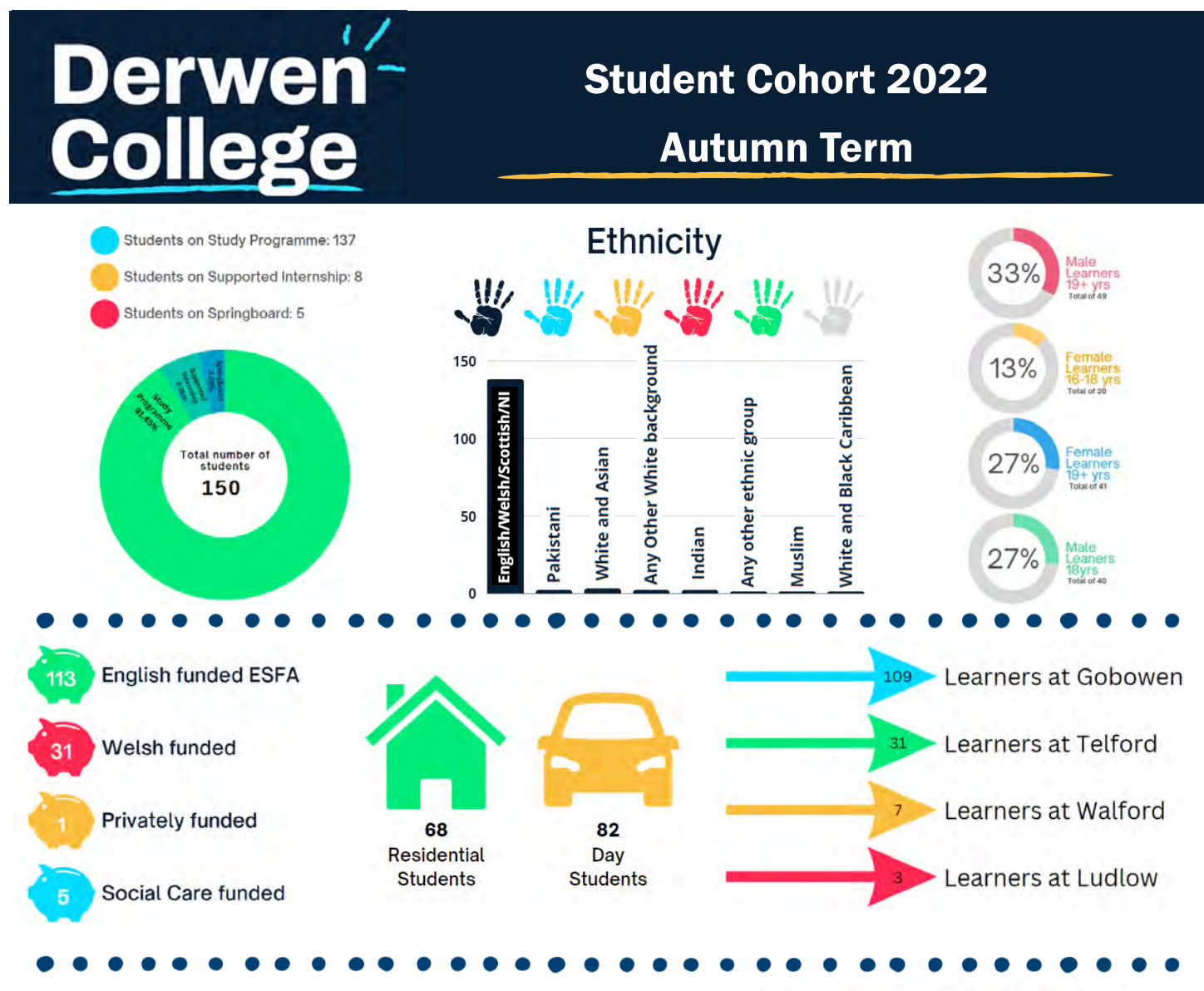
## December

- △ The talented Derwen Dance Crew (DDC) were dancing for joy after winning trophies and medals galore at a street dance competition, the Audacity Winter Street Dance competition in Walsall. Many of the students were new to competitions.
- △ Two floats were entered in the Oswestry Christmas parade.



△ And Covid Regulations and the need for safe procedures continued throughout the year. In February and in December, the last week of the Autumn term, there was particular activity, and everyone worked hard to minimise disruption and deal with the impact.

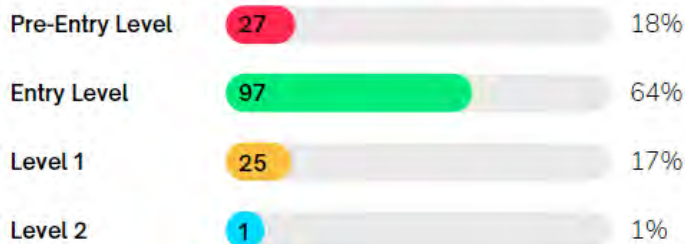
## The students in 2022



## Student Cohort 2022

### Autumn Term

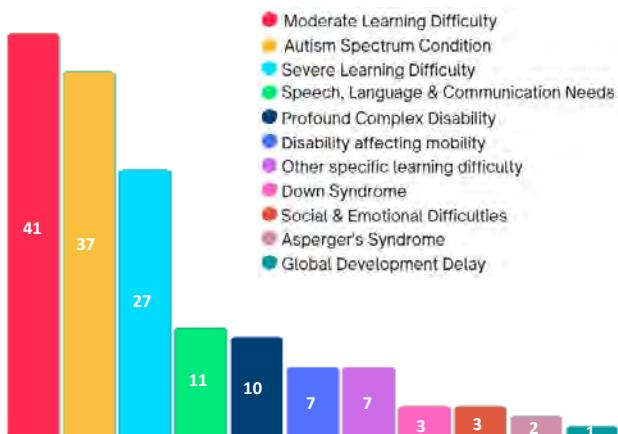
Number of students working at each level



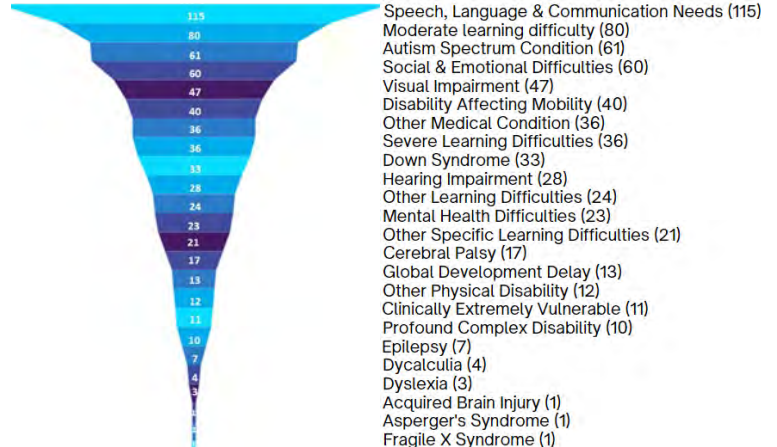
Learner's Main Pathway



Primary Learning Difficulty/Disability



Total Learners with Learning Difficulty/Disability





## Pathways and programmes

During the admissions process, students make an informed choice about which pathway or programme to embark on when they start college. Pathways are detailed vocational programmes, adopting a holistic approach to student development, and constantly under review. The following pathways and programmes are available:

### **Gobowen Main Site: residential and day**

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

### **Ludlow: day provision**

- △ Business Support and Enterprise (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)\*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)

### **Telford: day provision**

- △ Business Support, Sales and Marketing (vocational pathway)
- △ Hospitality (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)\*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)

### **Walford: day provision**

- △ Horticulture (vocational pathway)
- △ Sport and Fitness (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)\*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)

\* Springboard is funded through social care





## Curriculum summary for main site

\* Access to specialist clinical therapies is dependent upon appropriate funding

All students enrolled on our study programmes at our Gobowen campus will have access to:

### Independence

This may include:

- Travel training
- Skills in the home, such as preparing and cooking food, laundry, hoovering
- Skills in the community, such as shopping, budgeting, personal safety

### Sport, leisure and wellbeing

There is an extensive range of wellbeing activities at evenings and weekends for residential students. These include swimming, gym, football, Boccia, arts, karaoke, cinema, theatre and shopping trips.

Special occasions are celebrated including prize-giving, prom, religious festivals, and events, and all students are invited to take part.

### Learner Voice and Student Union Board

Derwen College Student Union (SU) is affiliated to the National Union of Students. Each October, students vote for who they want to represent them on the SU Board.

There is one representative and one deputy representative from each pathway. Students learn how to communicate their likes, dislikes, and thoughts, and how to represent the thoughts of other students to make Derwen College a special place for all of them.

### Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

Learners take part in all of the following PSHE modules:

- Online safety – modules 1, 2 and 3
- Managing relationships
- Rights and cultures
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Moving on
- Relationships and sex education, including bespoke support for anyone who needs it.

### Functional Skills

Functional Skills comprises of English, maths and ICT and is delivered through small discrete groups and embedded into every aspect of the pathway. It is linked to vocational activities and everyday life.

### Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

CEIAG is an integral part of the programme. Students on a vocational pathway take part in small group employability sessions. External guests are also invited to talk to students about their experiences outside of College. Impartial CEIAG is also provided by an external Careers Lead.

### Universal therapy provision

All students benefit from access to therapy services enabling a universal approach to developing independence in preparation for adulthood and transition post-College.

### Specialist therapy provision

Specialist therapy need should be identified in the EHCP or IDP, but the therapy team may recommend additions/alterations to outcomes and further therapy provision.

A student's specialist provision will be reviewed regularly, to ensure it meets their needs in the College environment. Therapy will be delivered in the most appropriate way to enable students to achieve their individual goals and outcomes. The students also have time to spend with the College therapy dog.

### Targeted therapy provision

Targeted therapy provision is available following referral to the integrated therapy team.

## Outcomes

Student progress against their Education Health Care Plans and their agreed personal targets is 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

### Destination data July 22 leavers

21–22 destination data – WORK				
Collection – year	Planned 21–22		Actual 21–22	
Planned leavers destination (identified at transition review)	41		43	
Paid work 16hrs+	0	0%	0	0%
Paid work less than 16hrs	9	21.95%	5	11.63%
Voluntary work	7	17.07%	8	18.60%
Local College or training programme	16	39.03%	17	39.54%
Not know at this stage	9	21.95		
Not in paid employment but looking for work			6	13.95%
Community activities			4	9.30%
No response			3	6.98%
21–22 destination data – LIVING				
Supported independent living	27	65.9%	10	23.26%
Residential placement	1	2.4%	2	4.65%
Not know at this stage	13	13.7%		
Living with family			17	39.53%
Living with family pending supported living			7	16.28%
No response			7	16.28%

National average of young people with SEND going into work – 5.4%



## The clients in 2022

It is one of the objects of Derwen College charity that we provide accommodation for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. The trustees have worked closely with the Senior Leadership Team and have reviewed the provision we make within this objective and what that means for our clients, our residents, of whom there were 34 in 2022. 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.

Derwen Care has been established to provide support for those needing it. All clients now have an up to date tenancy agreement.



## Excellent performance and quality

The College, a learning establishment, is characterised by a drive for continuous improvement and has strong and varied processes of reflection, evaluation and analysis.

### 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. These rigorous self-assessment procedures led the College to grade its performance 2021–22 as good.



There are numerous audit and monitoring procedures in place. In 2022 a Governance Review was commissioned, using an external consultant. This was part of the drive to ensure reflection on specific experiences and activities and leads to the lessons learnt being shared and implemented across the College.

## Inspection and public recognition

External Quality Assurers' feedback from awarding bodies has been extremely positive. The College holds the Matrix Standard and was re-accredited in 2021

The College was inspected by Ofsted, under the new Inspection Framework, from 9–11 November 2021, gaining the following grades:

△ Overall effectiveness	<b>Good</b>
△ The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
△ Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
△ Personal development	<b>Good</b>
△ Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
△ Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>

The report includes:

*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, reviewing specific areas identified in their 2019 inspection. The College has the following grades:

△ Is the service safe?	<b>Good</b>
△ Is the service effective?	<b>Good</b>
△ Is the service caring?	<b>Good</b>
△ Is the service responsive?	<b>Good</b>
△ Is the service well led?	<b>Good</b>

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 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 is, in fact, 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.

*He is doing so well throughout all work areas. When I think what he was first like when he started at college, to where he is now. The distance travelled by (student) has been huge. You should be extremely proud.*

*A huge thank you to you and all the staff involved in the recent Snowdonia trip. (Student) has really enjoyed her time working towards her Gold Award. After seeing the wonderful images on the film of students out walking and camping it made me so proud to be a parent and see how much effort and time goes into giving students the opportunities to participate. Cannot say a big enough Thank-you.*

*Just want to say a big Thank you. (Short Breaks guest) absolutely loved it and can't wait to stay again . Very strange having a weekend on our own . She loved all the staff and felt at home . It's fantastic that she felt so comfortable . Thanks.*

And from a journalist who reported at length for the professional journal *FE WEEK*:

*Step through the gates and it becomes clear the College has vast amounts of space, 52 acres in total. On a tour I go past orchards, a walled garden, commercial greenhouses, a garden centre, a period drama-esque building plus restaurant a 'nurture centre' for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, huge games pitches and a fully functioning hotel.... Oh, and a vintage shop. It's more like arriving at a self-sufficient village than a college.*

*Only at Derwen have I been perfectly served lunch and shown into a hotel room by someone with Downs Syndrome Why never before? To bring that better world into being Derwen College is modelling it here. That's why its huge emphasis on bringing the public into its spaces matters so much.*

**Jess Staufenberg, 4 March 2022**

And from the Commissioning Manager of a local authority, who visited on 23 November:

*...From reviewing files, speaking to staff and students it is evidence students are not only progressing well and benefitting from applying their learning direct into vocational settings, but they benefit from a wealth of activity choices, enabling them to gain the softer skills of socialization, making friends and building confidence. I found all records to be in order with strong safeguarding processes in place. Medication and care practices are robust.*

And from a member of the public:

*I stopped off after taking my little boy to the orthopedic hospital. I just spotted the sign for a Garden centre. My little boy has downs syndrome and after a difficult hospital appointment it was so uplifting to visit. Firstly being served by staff (with learning diffs) who could sign makaton was so lovely for my little boy and also to see adults with ds busy working. Lovely to see the display boards too with pictures of adults with down syndrome. What an amazing place !*

**Michelle Sawyer, end of January**

## Development projects

Change and innovation are constant and good progress was made with development projects underway. Land which was part of the College main estate was sold as development land. Work on the former Derwen Estate to transform it into a **Duke of Edinburgh's Award Centre** achieved just that: a transformation. It is the first of its kind in the country, sporting the official DofE sign. The area offers classroom space and an outdoor area where students can learn and practise DofE skills across uneven tracks, light a fire and use equipment such as stiles and gates, and even a practice canoe. This facility will be made available to other similar groups. Another trail blazing initiative.

The adaptation of bungalows 21 and 22 was completed to provide five-bedroom independence accommodation, wheelchair accessible, with a communal kitchen and dining room, two lounge areas and an outdoor eating and relaxation area. Five long term residents/clients have moved in.

In December 2021 the new Environmental and Sustainability Committee came together. During 2022 the Board supported the College commitment to the Shropshire Zero Carbon pledge, the group's objectives and aims were agreed, members received Carbon Literacy training, and a detailed Reduction of Carbon Footprint Action Plan was costed and agreed.

As part of the Association of Colleges and Natspec SEND Pilot Partnerships Project, the College is working with its partner college, Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire College, focusing initially on reciprocal work experience placements.





Early 2022 saw the rollout of the newly developed brand, working in conjunction with a local design agency. The focus on transforming our visual image and impact has been achieved through campus signage, publications and document design, and the website. Accessibility has been a major focus for example, text size and font, contrast colours and dyslexia friendly options.

The major development work and a significant amount of time have been spent on developing our partnership with Al Noor, Dubai, and with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH). In February a feasibility trip explored options for Derwen to provide a consultancy service for a vocational programme that KSH wanted to set up at their brand-new college. Once opened, it would be the first ever specialist college in Kuwait. This was seen as an exciting opportunity for Derwen to expand its reach internationally. Much discussion, analysis and further visits led to the signing of a contract for consultancy support. A project and delivery plan have been agreed.

## Leadership, management and staffing

The Senior Leadership Team is headed by Meryl Green, the Principal and CEO, who works with three Directors: Business and Finance; Human Resources and Estates; and Care, Health and Wellbeing and is supported by the Company Secretary. They have proved a committed, close working and very able team, with whom Governors work particularly closely. They ensure quality, provide real vision, drive and challenge and are supported by highly competent senior managers.

Staff numbers have increased, reflecting new and expanded provision and the increasing complexity of students' disabilities. Nationally, the labour market has become much tighter but the



College has yet to experience the critical recruitment difficulties many are experiencing. Continued professional development is closely monitored and any low completion rates actively followed up. Trustees have been pleased to see, indeed are almost envious of, the continually increasing staff wellbeing facilities and programme.

## 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 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 the 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.*

### Governors' activity in 2022

The Board works closely with the Senior Leadership Team. A very positive working relationship has been developed, which recognises the need for governors to provide effective challenge as well as active support.

Much of the detailed analysis and scrutiny of the College's operation is managed by the 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, and has undertaken work across the College's operation. The Standards and Effectiveness Committee continues its focus on care and the curriculum, and the Search and Governance Committee monitors the profile of the Board and the quality of governance.

Governors were delighted to be able to access the College sites again at times during the year, as Covid procedures were amended. For those fairly new to the Board there was at last the opportunity to become familiar with the operation of the College and those who work here.



It was decided that a review of governance should take place and an external consultant was given the brief to examine and comment on:

1. Effectiveness: How does governance impact on the College?
2. Culture and relationships: what are the dynamics and are support and challenge appropriate?
3. Suggestions for improving the strategic planning process with the Senior Leadership Team.
4. The effectiveness of the role, input and influence of the Clerk.

Formal feedback is awaited.

Major decisions and areas of activity during 2022 concerned:

- △ The consultancy agreement with Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH)
- △ The sale of a significant area of development land.

Governors give generously of their time, experience and expertise. This is not confined to meetings! Governor Mark Lord's '6 Perfect 10s' fundraising concert, which took place at the Holroyd Community Theatre in the summer, was a huge success. The concert featured Performing Arts students, with canapes and drinks served by Hospitality & Food students. Ticket sales and a raffle raised just under £3,000. This was a novel way to celebrate one's 60th birthday.

## 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 2024, 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 will be used for further development.

### Risk management

The trustees regularly examine the principal areas of the 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. College risk management has two distinct tiers: strategic and operational. The operational level is reviewed on a 'real time' basis and deals with individual departments, students, functions and duties. At the strategic level, the Senior Leadership Team reviews the risk assessment register monthly; it is reviewed at least termly as part of the College quality improvement plan; it is scrutinised by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Issues are debated and reported at Board meetings. This includes College pension arrangements, insurances (e.g. cyber security) and trustee responsibilities to ensure these remain in line with current legislation and operational factors.

The College's spacious campus is, when pandemic regulations and guidance allow, open to visitors and customers in the public areas 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 at strategic points on the campus enable a secure area for students, away from the public areas, to be closed off at 9 p.m. each evening. The central area of the College is pedestrianised. Departmental operational risk management encompasses all locations and individuals. There has been a major programme of installation of CCTV monitoring equipment and installation of intruder alarms and significant upgrading of pathways.

Site safety is reviewed through the Health and Safety Committee, which includes governor membership, is audited by specialist advisors and monitored by external agencies.

The College provides a safe and supportive environment for learners to access the internet, including social networking sites. Staff across the College 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 individuals as appropriate.

## Public benefit

Derwen College transforms lives. The number of students who proceed to supported living, students' 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 the 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 elements 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 efficient and effective use of public money. These students need access to much specialist provision, and it often needs to be on hand every day. It is only when sufficient numbers of students come together that employing specialist teachers, therapists, nurses, and care staff becomes achievable. 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 SEND, national specialist colleges are essential.

## Fundraising

- △ Donations £191,000
- △ The Vintage Advantage Shop £95,000
- △ Summer Fete & Christmas Fair £26,500
- △ The Fun Walk and Run, followed by the Fete, in May brought a welcome return to fundraising events, after the Covid 19 restrictions, and raised £14,500.
- △ Income of £12,000 was generated through the Christmas Fair. Students have undertaken sponsored activities, and staff are not slow to donate their time and energy.
- △ The notable event of 2022 was the Spinathon in April, which raised £7,853.
- △ The Freemasons and Rotary organisations continue to give generously to support the Duke of Edinburgh's Award activities.
- △ Three volunteer days have seen staff from HSBC, WR Partners and British Gas Engineers

have transformed the woodland area and made the Woodland Walk pathways accessible for all our students.

- △ Staff at Persimmon Homes Telford took on the Three Peaks Challenge in the summer for local charities.
- △ 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 major appeal for £1,000,000 launched to fund the further development and upgrading of the Agnes Hunt bungalow properties, is ongoing. In 2022 the Basil Houghton Memorial Trust donated £50,000 towards this.

## 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 pension scheme has been the subject of a detailed review with very positive results.

## Where next?

During recent years the College has managed a reduction in residential student numbers, a significant increase in day student numbers, the increase in the complexity of students' disabilities, the opening of three satellites, an expansion of the curricular programme, a major restructuring of provision for clients, the funding and opening of the hydrotherapy pool, massive improvements to buildings, the sale of some assets, the management of Covid 19's impact, a review of strategic priorities, and a step into international





consultancy. This has been achieved through team work, detailed planning, and without recourse to borrowing. The Senior Leadership Team and the trustees believe the charity is now in a strong position; it will embed the many developments and pursue its drive to improve continuously.

However national developments continue to offer more unknowns and potential challenges. The results of the consultation on the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Review are awaited. Both the College and the Board submitted responses and the Board added a statement about meeting high need, low incidence disability post-16 and its funding. Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation – Wales, led by the Welsh Government, is covering similar ground. The impact of the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill, which came into force on 28th April 22, and the reclassification by the Office for National Statistics of Further Education colleges into the public sector in November must be monitored carefully.

We remain dedicated to ensuring the very diverse needs of those whom we serve are met dynamically and exceptionally well.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 February 2022**

**Kathleen Kimber, Chair**

