

**Derwen
College**



Prospectus

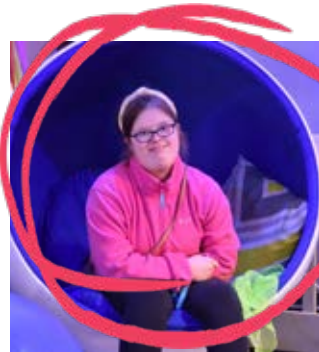
We are Derwen.

A specialist day and residential college for young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Our positive and empowering culture gives students the skills and confidence to live life their own way.



By creating a space for learners to develop hands-on, practical experiences, we give them the freedom to imagine what's possible, and empower them to achieve it.





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Welcome!

Welcome to Derwen College, a vibrant specialist further education college with a truly unique feel. We're here to help you grow in confidence, build your skills, and gain experiences that will set you up for adult life. Most of all, we want you to feel safe, happy, and well supported, ready to get the very most from your time with us.

There's no such thing as a typical Derwen College student. Every learner follows their own individual path, supported by our expert teaching, care and therapy teams.

Our innovative pathways, real work environments and student-led culture creates a welcoming community where our young people flourish and achieve things they never thought possible.

As we approach 100 years of changing lives, we're proud of our history, excited for the future, and look forward to being part of your journey as you take your exciting next steps towards a confident, more independent future.

Meryl Green
Principal and CEO



Our mission

At Derwen College, our mission is to enable everyone to achieve beyond what they and others believe possible.

We are committed to delivering exceptional programmes for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including:

- Learning and physical disabilities
- Autism
- ▲ Complex Learning Disabilities (CLD)
- Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD)



Our main campus is located in Gobowen, near Oswestry, and we also operate satellite sites across Shropshire:

● **Gobowen**
Residential and Day provision

● **Ludlow**
Day provision

● **Telford**
Day provision

● **Walford**
Day provision

Why choose us?

Queen's Award for Enterprise

Promoting opportunity through social mobility.



National Autistic Society

Autism Specialist Award 2022



"I'm so, so pleased about how well [student] is settling in – my heart feels like it could burst with joy.

An enormous thank you to you and your team who have made this possible... we are very lucky to have found Derwen College and for [student] to be given this amazing opportunity. I have no doubt she will absolutely love the whole experience and moving away from boring old Mum and Dad!!"

~ Parents of a residential student.

Read our 2026 Ofsted report card by scanning the QR code.

Ofsted



Read our report ↗



Admissions



We have an amazing team here at Derwen College, and they're all waiting to support you through this next stage of your education. Take your time to browse this prospectus, come and visit us and have a look around the College campus, and – most importantly – talk to us so we can help you decide which pathway will be the right one for you.

Our friendly admissions team will be happy to show you and your family, or carers, around Derwen College, giving you a chance to learn more about everything we offer.

Find out more about the admissions process on our website.

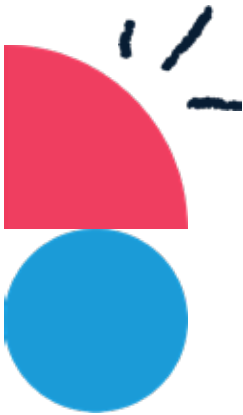
derwen.me/admissions



Your assessment



Just as you need to get to know us, we also take time to get to know you so we can give you the best opportunity and learning experience possible.



The first thing we need to do is to meet you and your parents and/or carers. This is part of our assessment process, where we learn about you, your life, what your interests and aspirations are.

Through this process, we identify the support you need and also establish whether Derwen College is right for you.

How soon should I apply?

It can take quite a long time to secure funding, so we really do encourage visits as early as possible (3–4 years before anticipated enrolment is ideal).

We work with local funding authorities right across the UK. We will help and advise through our admissions process to make it as simple and stress-free as possible.

Our Pathways and Programmes

Which is right for you?

Derwen College is not one-size-fits-all! We tailor each pathway and programme to fit individual student needs, and our flexible and adaptive approach makes sure we meet the learning requirements of all our students.

We offer fantastic external work experience opportunities linked to each vocational area.

This ensures students have developed key skills and are well-prepared for the workplace when leaving Derwen College.







Find out more about each of our pathways and programmes on our website.

derwen.me/pathways

We currently offer the following vocational pathways:

Residential and Day provision

Gobowen

-  Horticulture
-  Hospitality and Food
-  Performing Arts
-  Retail and Enterprise

Day provision only

Telford

-  Work and Independence

Ludlow

-  Work and Independence

Walford

-  Work and Independence

Linked pathways

(available at Gobowen)

Linked pathways are a popular and effective choice for many of our students. By choosing a linked pathway, students gain a diverse yet complementary set of skills to leave college with.

Students can choose any vocational pathway as their link. For example, Horticulture might be the main pathway, and Retail and Enterprise as the linked pathway. This gives a broader set of transferable work skills to utilise when considering workplace opportunities.



We currently offer the following programmes:



Learning for Life

Learning for Life is a bespoke programme created for young people who are not quite ready for a customer-facing environment. Students on this programme will develop their communication, personal development, team work, problem solving, and self-regulation skills.

Students also work closely with a chosen vocational pathway to develop their workplace skills. Many students fully transition to this linked pathway once they are ready.

Nurture

(available at Gobowen)

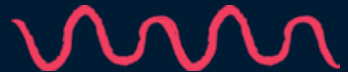
Our Nurture programme is aimed at students with complex learning disabilities (CLD), and profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), and is available as a residential or day provision.

It is a pre-vocational programme that is highly personalised for each student, with a curriculum based around independence, cognition, social interaction, wellbeing, and communication.

The programme aims to support young people from school to adulthood, maximising positive choice-making to increase and enhance quality of life outcomes.



Supported Internship



A Supported Internship is a structured, work based study programme, with the aim of sustained, paid employment and achieving long term career goals. It enables young people to:

- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Increase health and wellbeing
- Develop workplace skills



Scan the QR code to view our Nurture programme leaflet.

derwen.me/nurture-leaflet



Your study programme



Functional skills

Functional Skills comprises of English, maths and ICT, and is delivered through small discrete groups and embedded into every aspect of our pathways.






It is linked to vocational activities and everyday life.



Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)



Learners take part in the following PSHE modules:

-  PSHE introduction
-  My place in the community
-  Online safety
-  Bespoke support
-  Relationships and sex education





Therapies and wellbeing

Therapy and wellbeing support are integrated throughout all aspects of college life, including care, work, and social settings, which ensures each student’s individual needs are met. Our extensive range of therapy and wellbeing support includes:

- Positive Behaviour Support
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Counselling
- Physiotherapy
- Learning Disability Nurses

Students are encouraged to join one of the many wellbeing sessions on offer, or alternatively spending time with our therapy dogs! Individual therapy sessions, for example hydrotherapy, are also available dependent upon funding.

Find out more about our medical and therapy support by scanning the QR code.



derwen.me/therapies

Tom's story

"Tom's independence has grown immeasurably by simply being exposed to a great variety of experiences in a supportive setting."



My time at Derwen College

Tom was a student on the Learning for Life programme with Hospitality and Food as a linked pathway. As part of his pathway training, Tom accessed internal work experience placements, which were built into his timetable. These included TipTop Takeout, Hotel 751, and The Orangery Restaurant.

Tom, who has quadriplegic cerebral palsy and severe learning disabilities, graduated in 2024. Tom loved his time at Tip Top Takeout, an internal takeaway service available to staff, designed to enable students like Tom to fully engage with food preparation.

Tom enjoyed helping others in his residence, and thrived in the social aspect of being a residential student. He made lots of friends at College, and worked hard to succeed in his tasks.

Tom's mum said:

"Tom has truly thrived as a student at Derwen College!

He has learnt that using his charm and winning personality to start interacting with people is a great superpower."

College Therapy Support

The Speech and Language Therapy team (SALT) created a Grid Player (communication app) which allowed Tom to communicate more closely with those around him. Tom was able to use the device to great effect in all areas of his life: with family, in his residence, at work placements and on transport.

As Tom's self-reliance and confidence grew, he wanted more independent responsibilities, including the ability to hang up his own clothes in his room. The College's Occupational Therapy Team installed a wheelchair accessible rail in Tom's room. As a result, Tom was able to be completely independent in managing his own laundry.





Sports and Leisure

There is a huge variety of sports and leisure activities and clubs on offer in the evenings and at weekends. Whether it is an existing hobby, or trying something new, we have an ever-evolving programme. This could include:

Sports

- Football
- ▣ Tennis
- ▣ Swimming
- ▣ Dance
- ▣ Cycling



Leisure

- ▣ Arts & crafts
- ▣ Kayaking
- ▣ Board games
- Beekeeping
- ▣ Lego club



We have so many fabulous facilities on-site. These include:

- Indoor heated pool
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Sports hall
- Sports field
- Dance studio
- DofE Outdoor Centre



- Fully equipped gym
- Woodland Walk
- Sensory space
- Walled Garden
- Student Union



Leisure activities also extend beyond clubs and sports. Students have the opportunity to go on organised activities and trips, either locally or further afield.

Our wellbeing programme plays an important part in helping build confidence, enjoy free time, learn new skills, meet new friends, and have fun at College.



Duke of Edinburgh's Award



Derwen College was the first provider in Shropshire to run the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award for students with SEND.

Our unrivalled programme allows our students to achieve, and go beyond, their expectations, and empowers them to learn new skills, overcome obstacles and build confidence.



We have a dedicated DofE Outdoor Centre at our Gobowen campus, which features different terrains, a selection of gates and stiles, a canoe simulator and a climbing wall! This facility allows students to better prepare for their Bronze, Silver and Gold expeditions.

“Throughout College and DofE, inclusivity is vital and we want all of our students, regardless of abilities or disabilities, to relish the experience.”

~ **Steve Evans, Sports and DofE Coordinator**
Gold Winner, Pearson National Teaching Awards 2021

Brendan's story

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity, so grab it with both hands. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award changed my perspective on life."

My time at Derwen College

When Brendan joined Derwen College, he never imagined just how much he would achieve or how far he would go. Four years later, he graduated brimming with confidence, new found independence skills, and no fewer than three Duke of Edinburgh's Awards!

Brendan trained in Hospitality and Food, learning how to serve customers in our on-site outlets. He took part in many sports and leisure activities, including a 24-hour charity Spinathon, and even joined Performing Arts students in the College production of The Little Mermaid!

Brendan says that throughout his journey, he always felt supported. "Staff helped me whenever I needed it – not necessarily when I wanted it, but when I actually needed it."



Meeting HRH Prince Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh, during a visit to Derwen College, was a moment he will never forget. "I met him outside the DofE Centre and told him all about the canoe simulator. I was so emotional."

Along with his new found independence, Brendan also received the prize for Sport and Leisure at his graduation ceremony. "I had an amazing four years at College. I'm proud of myself." Brendan says.

Looking back on everything he achieved, Brendan says: "Derwen College is just amazing – the best college in the world, I want to say. I'm proud of myself. I keep in touch with friends and I've made new friends. I am more independent and I think my confidence grew."

Brendan's mum said:

"Derwen College gives young adults like Brendan the chance to truly live their own lives in a safe, supportive environment.

I'm incredibly grateful we found it – it is such a huge part of his story."

Independent Living Skills (ILS)



Included in weekly timetables are sessions in Independent Living Skills (ILS). Independence skills are a vital part of students' learning at Derwen College, helping to prepare you for life after College, so that you can live more independently in the future.

We set individual targets and identify the level of support that each student requires, so that they can develop each skill at their own pace.



Examples of the skills students learn in their ILS sessions include:

- Preparing food
- ▲ Safe use of cleaning equipment
- Time management
- ▲ Budgeting and money handling
- Shopping
- Self-medication

Travel training

Students are supported by staff to access the wider community whilst keeping themselves safe, learning valuable skills on their journey to independence. This includes:

- Accessing College trips
- Going to work placements
- ▲ Food shopping





Learner voice

Learner Voice at Derwen College is very strong and students' views influence everything that we do. Students learn to communicate their thoughts, helping to drive forward change for people with SEND, and making Derwen College a special place for all of them.

We have a thriving Student Council who play a very active role both in College and beyond, helping to drive forward change for people with SEND. Student Council members are voted for in annual elections, and represent a broad spectrum of areas in College, including a President and Deputy, residences, pathways, wellbeing, freshers and more.

“The best thing about working on the Student Council (SC) is working with new people, learning new things about them, and making new friends.”

~ Student Council member



Day or Residential?

Which is right for you?



Derwen College offers programmes on both a day and residential basis, and both offer amazing opportunities. We pride ourselves in offering young people with SEND the same opportunities that their siblings or other young adults have available to them when they go on to further or higher education.

Day student provision

All our sites offer day provision, and at our Gobowen campus, day students have their own dedicated buildings.



These well-equipped facilities, supported by our day student teams, provide the base for our day students to learn and develop independence skills.

Both our satellites and our Gobowen campus offer a warm and friendly environment that day students can call their own, with lounge spaces, kitchen facilities and student lockers.



Kaitland's story

"I love it when she proudly brings home plants that she's grown. But it's how she's progressed into adulthood that has impressed us the most."



My time at Derwen College

Kaitland, from Shropshire, came to Derwen College as a day student from Severndale Academy, the school she'd been at since the age of three.

Kaitland was understandably nervous about leaving school and the friends she'd known since she was very young. Living locally, Kate and her family were able to visit the College for activity days with her school and also with the Shropshire Parent and Carer Council (PACC) group.

For Kaitland, who is autistic and has moderate learning difficulties, it was important to be part of the process of transition from school and to have time to understand changes ahead. The bespoke learning at Derwen College has supported Kaitland with these difficulties and challenges.

Kaitland's mum said:

"She has learnt boundaries but also independence.

Everything that Kate has achieved is outstanding. She's amazing, and so resilient and resourceful. She's a star!"

She accessed Speech and Language Therapy and counselling to deal with feelings and support, which helped her gain confidence. Kate travelled to College by taxi every day, a big step from when she used to walk to school with Mum.

Kaitland says that she was very happy during her time at Derwen College. "Gardening is my favourite thing, and working in the greenhouse." She enjoys making crafts with friends in Corner House, where she also attends weekly Independent Living Skills sessions.



Staff and family recognised that one of Kaitland's biggest challenges was making choices for herself and making her opinions heard. Therefore, it was a proud moment when she signed up for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and was also elected by her peers to represent day students in the Student Council.



Residential provision

For students who attend residentially at our Gobowen campus, all accommodation is spacious, comfortable and welcoming. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for cleaning, shopping, cooking and general living skills.

Students live as independently as possible but there are always staff close at hand to offer advice, encouragement and the appropriate amount of support.

To begin with, students live in a staffed residence in the heart of the campus. Many students then progress on to smaller houses with a reduced level of support, reflecting typical post-college supported living, but we always have staff nearby should assistance be needed at any time.

To read 'Life as a residential student', scan the QR code or visit:



derwen.me/residential



Millie's story

"I would recommend students to go to see what it's like and they will love it. You get to learn to be independent making your own choices whilst being helped and cared for."



My time at Derwen College

After a welcoming first visit, the decision to join Derwen College was easy for Millie and her family. Her passion for music and dance made Performing Arts an easy choice. But after arriving at College from London, Millie faced the challenge of living away from home for the first time.

After a stressful wait for funding approval, Millie arrived at Derwen College with little time for a planned transition period, but Millie was determined, and excited to make new friends. "Millie had seen her brother go to university and was keen to experience the same," said Millie's mum.

Support from across College was crucial in helping Millie settle in. The College's safeguarding and care teams worked closely with Millie, helping her to manage friendships, understand boundaries, and navigate online content safely.



In her Independent Living Skills sessions, Millie learnt how to cook basic meals, make her bed, do her laundry, and walk safely to the local shops. She also completed her Bronze, Silver, and Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Awards at College, and was invited to celebrate her Gold award at Buckingham Palace.

After Millie had progressed and settled in to College, she was able to move into the Bungalows residence, which offers students more independence while still having staff close at hand.

Throughout her time at College, Millie benefited from a multi-disciplinary approach to care, with staff from different areas working together to understand her needs and provide consistent support. Millie also enjoyed spending time with Teddy, the College therapy dog.

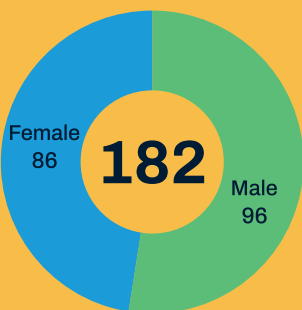
Millie's mum said:

"She now has such a strong sense of herself. We understand that the needs of the students who come to Derwen College are many and varied, but under Derwen College's care they are always seen as individuals."

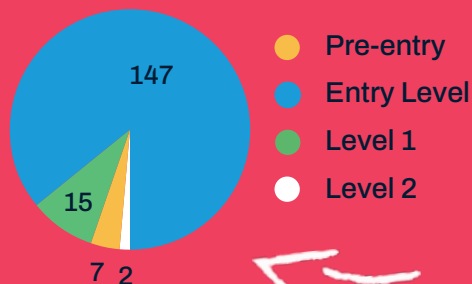
Our student cohort

Below is a selection of data taken from our Spring 2026 student cohort.

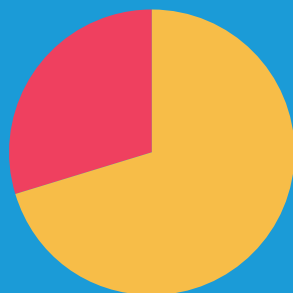
Total students



Number of students working at each level



Student age groups



54
Learners 16-18 yrs

128
Learners 19+ yrs



101

Residential students



81

Day students

Our students come to Derwen College with a wide variety of disabilities, difficulties and conditions. These include:

120 Speech, language and communication needs

104 Moderate learning difficulty

100 Autism

69 Social and emotional difficulties

68 Visual impairment

49 Down Syndrome

45 Global Development Delay

38 Anxiety disorder

29 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

29 Disability affecting mobility

This is not an exhaustive list. For more information, please speak to the admissions team.



Life after College

Students are supported to explore future options whilst at Derwen College. This includes making positive plans and support through transitions in lots of different ways.

There is an alumni page on Facebook for students to keep up to date with news and events at Derwen College, as well as the opportunity to reconnect with College friends.

Our services



There are other services available at Derwen College. We have a small number of supported living homes, and also offer Short Breaks and respite provision.



Short Breaks offers adults with learning disabilities and autism, the opportunity to enjoy an individually tailored stay at our specialist respite centre.

To enquire about our availability or to find out more information, please contact the Short Breaks team on 01691 779243, or alternatively, email shortbreaks@derwen.ac.uk

To learn more about funding and who is eligible for Short Breaks, scan the QR code or visit:



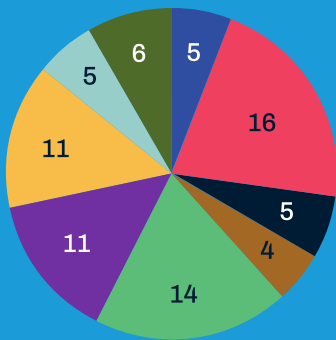
derwen.me/shortbreaks



Destination outcomes

We are very proud that our student outcomes far exceed the national average for young people with SEND going into work. Our 2024–25 graduates have, so far, gone on to achieve the following:

Destination: Work/training outcomes

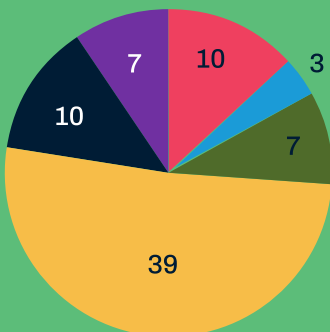


Total respondents: 77

- Paid employment
- Voluntary work
- Community activities
- Looking for work
- Derwen College placement extended
- Derwen College Supported Internship
- Further Education: Other provider
- Social Care programme
- Other/no response



Destination: Living outcomes



- Supported Living
- Residential placement
- Derwen College Residential placement
- Living with family
- Pending Supported Living
- Other/no response



Visit us!



Derwen Marketplace

Derwen Marketplace is a unique setting at our Gobowen campus, where students undertake work placements in a range of customer facing outlets to gain vocational work skills.

These outlets include our Garden Centre & Gift Shop, Walled Garden Café, The Orangery Restaurant, The Vintage Advantage, Station Café, and Hotel 751.



Open Days

We host regular open days at all of our sites. We encourage you to book a visit and get a feel for Derwen College, and what we can offer.



Book your space at one of our upcoming open days today!

derwen.me/opendays

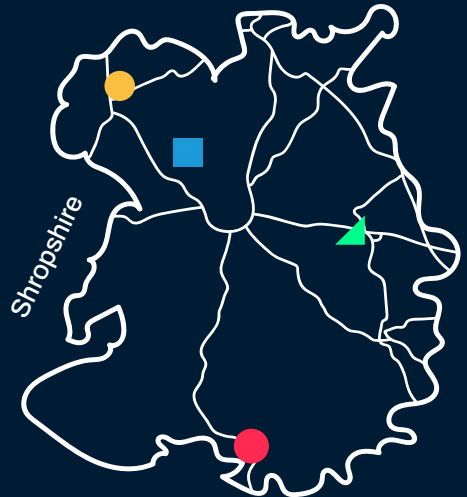
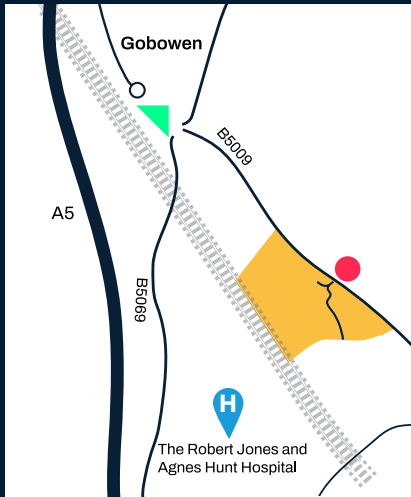




How to find us







Derwen College's main site is located in the village of Gobowen, near Oswestry, in north Shropshire. Our satellite sites are spread across Shropshire.




Our Gobowen campus is accessible via public transport. Gobowen railway station is a 10–15 minute walk from the College. There are regular bus services which stop outside the College ensuring easy transport links to Oswestry and the surrounding areas.



-  Gobowen railway station
-  College main entrance

-  Gobowen
-  Walford
-  Telford
-  Ludlow

-  Email: admissions@derwen.ac.uk
-  Website: www.derwen.ac.uk
-  Telephone: 01691 661234

-  Derwen College, Whittington Road, Gobowen, Shropshire, SY11 3JA
-  Registered Charity No: 1153280
-  Registered Company No: 8615826