

Background

ACT is Wales' largest training provider, and last year trained approximately 6,400 learners last year across its Traineeship and Apprenticeship programmes, with 96% of learners rating our course as excellent/good.

ACT is passionate about ensuring all young people are equipped to become successful adults with a wide range of skills and abilities. Far too many young people engage with ACT at age 16 with deficient literacy and numeracy skills and are unprepared to successfully transition from school into the 'real world'.

We strongly believe that early intervention is needed to ensure all young people; especially those disengaged with education, are able to enter the world of work with the best possible chance of success. We're also passionate about reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

ACT developed a specific, targeted Schools Programme in 2012 as an attempt to redress these fundamental issues. In March 2018, ACT Schools became a registered Independent Schools with the capacity to educate 150 learners. The school is registered to admit students with special educational needs specific to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Since establishing our academies provision we have been able offer an alternative key stage 4 education to young people across South Wales who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion, who are school phobic or are classed as vulnerable. Since September 2016 we have been providing Key Stage 3 provision, expanding our targeted age range to 11-16.

We offer a true alternative to mainstream learning, which is designed to engage young people and help them overcome their barriers to participation, preparing them for adulthood and the world of work. Our dynamic alternative curriculum and range of support packages truly

encourages, motivates and nurtures young people to realise what they can achieve.

Our learners are guaranteed:

- A bespoke programme that suits their needs Access to our experienced pastoral team
- Daily support with behaviour and personal barriers
- Regular progress and target setting
- All the support they need to ensure successful transition to post-16 destinations

More information on our offer can be found below in Annex A

Consultation response

The reasons for and support available for children and young people at risk of EOTAS, including through their exclusion from mainstream provision

- We are witnessing an increase of referrals for provision from local authorities, quite often with lower thresholds of tolerance. For example, previously learners would have been excluded for more significant issues but now seem to be referred for disruptive behaviour and many not necessarily meeting the previous threshold expected for EOTAS.
- Learners are contacting us directly to ask to attend instead of their mainstream school.

How effectively parents are engaged and supported throughout the EOTAS process

- ACT has a robust induction process whereby the parent/carers are required to be involved.
- Parents often express that they don't feel that they have been consulted with fully by the placing authority in relation to their child's education.

The variation in rates of EOTAS for children and young people with particular characteristics (such as learners with special educational needs or who are eligible for free school meals) and the consequences of this

- ACT have 73% of learner who are FSM.

The levels of financial support available to support EOTAS and children and young people at risk of becoming EOTAS and whether this represents value for money

- Local Authority budgets appear to be restricted and the amount of learners needing provision significantly outweighs the places available.
- Pupil Deprivation Grant is rarely available to us and doesn't appear to follow the learner in to EOTAS provision.
- ACT Schools is not for profit and costs the placement at the lowest possible value in order to break even.

Responsibility and accountability for the education of pupils who become EOTAS

- The registration of providers as independent schools has improved the responsibility and accountability aspects however consistency is needed in respect of the registration of learners. At present it is unclear as to where learners should be 'on roll' and therefore further guidance would be welcomed.

Attainment of children and young people EOTAS

- There were a total of 28 year 11's who completed their education at ACT schools in July 2019. Of these, 15 were located at the Cardiff site with the remaining 13 being based at Caerphilly.
- The outcomes can be broken down as follows:

Outcome	Cardiff		Caerphilly		Overall		2017-18 comparison
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
1 x L2 Qual	13	87%	10	77%	23	82%	+44% (38%)
2 x L2 Qual	10	67%	0	0%	10	34%	+29% (5%)
1 GCSE	15	100%	13	100%	28	100%	+25% (75%)
2 GCSE's	14	93%	10	77%	24	85%	+35% (50%)
3 GCSE's	12	80%	8	62%	20	71%	+43% (28%)
4 GCSE's	4	27%	3	23%	17	61%	N/A
L1 threshold (5 GCSE's or equivalent)	7	47%	3	23%	10	34%	+29% (5%)
Confirmed destination	15	100%	11	85%	26	93%	+21% (72%)
Destination	ACT	4	ACT	1	ACT	5	18%
	College	8	College	10	College	18	64%
	Employment	1			Employment	1	4%
	Army	1			Army	1	4%
	Apprenticeship	1			Apprenticeship	1	4%

The GCSE grades achieved can be seen in the two tables below. The grade comparisons from 2017-18 have also been included. The main points to consider are how this academic year has seen the first awarding of GCSE's (4%) within the higher Level 2 grade boundary (A-C) as well as an increase in the number of learners achieving D grades (+13%). The average grades in all subjects have increased by at least 1 grade with Cardiff learners and have remained the same in the Caerphilly cohort, apart from in Mathematics which has seen the average increase by 1 grade.*

Cardiff	English Language		Mathamatics		Maths Numeracy		Art	
Grade	2017-18	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19
B				1			N/A	
C						1		
D		2		3		3		5
E	1	3		1	1	1		
F	1	7	1	3	1	3		
G		3		5	1	4		
U	1		1	2	1	2		

Caerphilly	English Language		Mathematics		Maths Numeracy			
Grade	2017-18	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19	2017-18	2018-19
B							N/A	
C								2
D		1	1	1	1	1		1
E		1			1			3
F	4	4	2	1	3	4		
G	3	6	1	5	1	4		
U	4	1	4	5	3	4		

The quality of support provided to children and young people in the range of EOTAS provision

- We have recently restructured the use of support staff. We firmly believe that the support staff are integral to the success of the provision and the attainment of our young people and therefore we heavily invest in their CPD.
- All centres utilise an attendance and wellbeing officer to support learners and monitor attendance patterns to intervene early for anyone 'dropping off' .
- An ALNCo advisor is in place to ensure our most vulnerable learners are supported.
- Our whole delivery approach is inclusive.
- We liaise and work closely with external agencies (careers, police, fire, youth offenders) in order to look at holistic support for our learners.

Professional development support for Pupil Referral Unit staff, including those who provide home tuition

- ACT Schools are supported by ACT as a whole in relation to CPD of staff.
- Staff are encouraged to carry out a minimum of 30 hours a year of CPD.
- ACT engages with other professionals in order to secure relevant training for staff e.g safeguarding, knife safety
- ACT Schools now ensures all staff are registered with the Education Workforce Council as a course of best practice

The potential risks for children and young people EOTAS such as increased barriers to accessing mental health support, increased risk of involvement with crime and the criminal justice system such as 'county lines'.

- Inconsistency in registration of learner means that responsibility is somewhat unclear. For example, schools who place learners with EOTAS often then revoke their support opportunities such as accessing the Education Psychologists.
- Lack of Education Welfare services especially in relation to attendance

- 23% of our learners have been charged by police
- 40% admit to carrying a weapon in public
- 51% have admitted to using an illegal substance
- Pupils risk being missed or lost e.g once a learners has been sent out to EOTAS provision, it is unclear what their opportunities are for reintegration back to mainstream education.

Annex A

2018 – 2019 Curriculum

We have developed a curriculum that focuses both on academic and vocational subjects, offering learners an opportunity to work towards achieving the same as their mainstream counterparts but in an environment that is more suited to their needs. Recent changes in the reporting of performance measures have seen the gap extended between academic achievers and those with barriers towards education. However, we have taken steps to ensure the curriculum we offer promotes equity in opportunity with a curriculum development plan in place which considers the key purposes for the Curriculum for Wales 2022.

A heavy focus is also placed on experiential learning and the timetable is divided so that classroom based sessions are short and sharp. We work closely with local agencies in order to enhance the curriculum as much as possible. For example, we have recently worked with South Wales Fire Service in order to promote fire safety as well as allowing the learners to explore careers in the public services. The success of this project has resulted in one of our learners being given a professional reference by the fire service in order to apply for junior fire fighters as a stepping stone to a career in the service.

KS 3

At KS3 we recognise the need to provide a nurturing environment suitable for pupils transitioning from primary school.

There is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy whilst addressing some of the barriers that learners are facing. The overall aim is to transition them back into school at key stage 4 or to prepare them for successful transition into alternative provision at KS4, whether that be with us or another provider. Qualifications are offered at Entry 3 level and have specifically been selected to complement our KS4 curriculum as well as providing underpinning knowledge for the Welsh baccalaureate suite. Individual learning pathways are agreed during the induction process to ensure that the bespoke curriculum offered to each individual is realistic and achievable whilst also allowing learners to be stretched and challenged.

KS 4

Within the KS4 department we have a staff team from a range of backgrounds; secondary education, post 16 education and youth work. This diverse mix of teaching and engagement styles allows us to be creative in our delivery.

Each curriculum area is taught by the subject tutor in one of our designated KS4 classrooms.

The curriculum is built around a core suite of qualifications which include GCSE qualifications in English Language, Mathematics, Maths- numeracy and Art as well as BTEC qualifications in Science and personal and social development. Additional opportunities in food technology, work related education, creative media and sport are also offered to enrich the learner journey. The curriculum is focused on providing a platform for educational attainment whilst also relating all practice to real life situations in order to equip our learners with the life skills they require.

Due to the backgrounds of some of our learners, they can often be denied the opportunity to carry out work experience. However, we aim to provide a work based experience for all of our learners. This may occur as a placement within departments in the wider ACT team or may be approached as a group placement which has previously worked very well at a local radio station.

Similar to the KS3 program, the individualised curriculum will be decided upon during the learners' induction process, giving flexibility to the subjects on offer, ensuring that the learners' needs are fully met.

Vocational Provision

Learners who attend our academy are also able to access our skills centres in order to complete vocational qualifications in construction skills, motor vehicle maintenance, animal care or hair and beauty. The routes are structured so that over 1 year a learner can work towards completion of a relevant skill specific level 1 qualification which gives them the basic technical skills required to work in that industry. During the second year, learners work towards a level 2 qualification building on the skills they learnt in their first year.

Pastoral & Wellbeing Support

The wellbeing of our learners is central to the work we do at ACT. As identified by Estyn in their 2018 monitoring visit, staff at the school know the pupils extremely well and provide them with valuable support in and beyond the classroom. Over time, most pupils develop strong trust in the staff, which helps them to engage positively with their learning, develop confidence in their ability and make suitable progress.

Our robust safeguarding reporting systems ensure our learners feel safe and secure whilst attending the school. This was highlighted in the Cardiff Authorities Young Inspectors report this year.

A strong focus is made on encouraging healthy lifestyles. The introduction of a school cook has allowed us to provide healthy and nutritious meals for our learners on a daily basis, expanding on their diet and supporting them to make educated food choices.

Learner representatives meet monthly to discuss the provision in the School Learner Council. This is an opportunity to hear learner issues as well as taking on board their valued opinions regarding how we can improve the school.

Attainment

During the 2018-19 academic year, 28 Year 11's completed their education at ACT Schools. Their outcomes can be summarised as follows:

- 100% of our learners achieved at least 1 GCSE qualification
- 71% achieved 3 GCSE qualifications
- 34% of learners achieved 5 GCSE's or more, a measure comparable to the previous Level 1 threshold. This was an increase of 29% from the previous academic year.
- 82% of learners achieved a Level 2 qualification and for the first time, 4 % of learners achieved the higher Level 2 equivalent GCSE grades (A*-C).

Progression

Of the 28 leavers, 26 had secured a positive destination upon leaving ACT. Destinations were; 18 to college, 5 continued at ACT, 1 to the Army, 1 to employment and 1 on to an apprenticeship. As of mid-September 2019, all were engaged in their respective destinations.

The 2 learner who hadn't secured positive progressions were both being supported by Careers Wales.

Future Developments

The 2019-20 academic year has started with our highest ever occupancy with 120 learners accessing the majority of their education at our academy provision with a further 49 learners attending our Hadfield Road site for vocational day provision.

Curriculum developments for the coming year include the introduction of the delivery of the Crest Science award across all key stages to promote STEM subjects. Working is also continuing on the development of our literacy and numeracy curricula with key focus on the embedding of the key purposes of the curriculum for Wales.

Investment has been made into the support structures surrounding our learners. This includes the appointment of a Thrive practitioner in each centre to address social and emotional wellbeing, an ALNCo advisor to ensure our most vulnerable learners are receiving the support they need and designated attendance officer to address absences at the earliest opportunity to prevent long term disengagement.

The facilities at both our academy sites have undergone significant developments over the summer period with new sports facilities being built which include an astro turf area, indoor fitness suite and a boxing gym.