

## The Worshipful Company of Water Conservators.



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### A Gogarth Perspective

**Ysgol y Gogarth has enjoyed a long and successful relationship with the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators. Progress made by disabled pupils is often not recognised by a standard approach in education and innovation at the school makes this point very clearly. A new and successful approach has been developed with the help of the Water Conservators and has led to new initiatives in the education of disabled pupils.**

**By Jon Goodwin 14-19 coordinator at Ysgol y Gogarth, Llandudno.**

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The micro level points scoring system dominates much of education. Experience at Ysgol y Gogarth suggests that the true perspective is perhaps better seen from a macro level – the bigger trends and changes in the progress of young people.

Within education ‘progress’ is the holy grail. Data is gathered from national tests. Schools and pupils are compared with similar schools and pupils nationally and internationally. School Management teams, Governors and Inspectors spend a lot of time looking at graphs.

Within Special education – education for young people with a very diverse range of additional needs and learning difficulties – progress is harder to measure using conventional tools. However, we are no less dedicated to the progress of our pupils.

Ysgol y Gogarth enjoys a long and successful relationship with the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators which came about as a result of a chance meeting between a Conservator and a member of staff. We soon found that we share a commitment to putting the right tools and experiences in front of young people. We believed that this was the most effective way for them to make progress. It’s been an innovative way of working that has met with much success. This scale of success has come into focus for me recently. A new perspective, if you will.

Our students didn’t used to do much practical or vocational work. We were a more traditional, classroom based school. With our partners we’ve changed that and established a very strong practical, vocational ethos. Our partners have trusted our judgement about what we need to make this change. Over the years, Water Conservators have funded polytunnels and plants, gardening tools, and, latterly, uniforms and tools to equip our young people to work in the community. This has been a great success. But our innovative approach has created a problem of its own. The problem that has developed is that our students don’t want to leave school to go to college, because college puts them back into a traditional classroom and doesn’t recognise their progress or new skills.

The aspirations of our students have been raised. They are confident in the community and in a college environment – our vocational department has equipped them with the skills to access some vocational link courses at college, but there is no suitable full time course for them to attend. They are hungry to learn and make progress!



To address this we led the way in setting up a professional's network from local schools and colleges. Recently I attended a meeting where local colleges proposed radically new courses to respond to the progress that our learners have made. Courses that will truly meet the changed needs of our students and their new skills; courses that are designed to lead directly to mainstream courses and employment opportunities; courses that the students will be excited to leave school for and give them a real feeling of value and purpose. I am still smiling both within myself and on the outside; the professional fulfilment of my colleagues brings smiles too into a very happy environment.

I think that this is progress! It also offers a good perspective on what a successful relationship with people who recognise challenges and meet them, a London-based livery company and a committed benefactor can achieve.

“Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.” without doubt an acorn was planted at Gogarth.

Jon Goodwin

Ysgol Gogarth