

# Parent newsletter:

## Upper school

### Letter from Mrs Retallick, Headteacher

I have the pleasure in writing to you at the end of a very busy half term. It has been a half term of celebration, hard work and embedding our routines from last year. New routines and high expectations to ensure we make the most of every learning opportunity in each school day. I have enclosed our annual governors report to parents for your reference.

I am delighted to share with you that our Deputy Headteacher Mr Prygodzicz secured his own headship last week and will be leaving us at Christmas to become the new Headteacher at Ferndale Community School and we wish him the very best for the future. I will keep you updated on his replacement.

As you know, we want the very best for all of our children and our rules; be ready, be respectful and be responsible are embedded in all of our routines and actions. In light of pupil feedback, we are launching a refreshed approach to homework after half term and welcome your support with this. Further details on this are available later in the newsletter.

As we move into the months with more challenging weather, I would be grateful if you would encourage your child to attend school every day as we know that attendance have a significant impact on academic achievement. The NHS Wales website is particularly helpful with information about different ailments and illnesses and has a specific box with useful information about whether school attendance is advised with different conditions.

Ready to learn has launched this autumn term with good success to date. Listening to pupils, it is clear that this strategy has had a positive impact on the amount of learning taking place in lessons and has set a clear system that all understand well. We will continue to monitor and evaluate this provision, working alongside pupils to do so. My thanks for your support in this.

Have a wonderful half term break.

Kirsty Retallick

## **Letter from Mr Ryan Evans, Head of Upper School**

Upper school has had a fantastic start to the academic year. Pupils have been buoyed by the success of last year's year 11 who achieved the best set of results the school has celebrated in the last decade. The school is most definitely on an upward trajectory and we are very much looking forward to breaking records once again this year! Once again, pupil experience is a fundamental aspect of our planning. We want all pupils to achieve 3 C's – Character, Culture and Currency in the form of examination results. Hopefully this newsletter will make you, as parents proud of the efforts of the young people of Upper school. In order to meet your son/daughters targets within school, attendance as always is a fundamental focus as success is always a by-product of excellent attendance. Our internal target for the full academic year is 95% for each pupil and we appreciate your support in ensuring your son/daughter maintains that standard.

### **Experiences**

Some of our enterprise starts of year 10 and 11 had the fantastic opportunity to present their views on financial education and life skills to the nation via the BBC1 Wales Today program this week. It was fantastic to know that millions of people would have the opportunity to hear the opinions of the young people of Ysgol Nantgwyn with presentations from Kyra Olden, Tomas Howard, Connor Priday, Sadie Arundell, Maiya Webb and Ellie Jones.

Pupils from years 9 through 11 visited the Millennium Centre to see a star cast in Shakespeare's Macbeth. Pupils interested in the arts have also been to see Romeo and Juliet by Ballet Cymru as well as visit London. Pupils were amazed by the acting skill and scale of productions on each experience and I'm sure the trip will have inspired some of our budding actors to excel in the up-coming school production.

Mr A Evans has once again been breaking the male-female vocation stereotypes by linking girls into predominantly male working environments by facilitating experiences in engineering, computing and mechanics. His latest venture is to review apprenticeships and collaboration activities with Sony in Pencoed.

### **Sporting activities**

The sporting teams of upper school have had a very successful start to the year. Senior football kicked off the season against a strong performance against Coleg Y Cymmoedd despite a narrow 4-3 loss. The year 10 rugby team finished second at an inter schools tournament, building upon the success of year 9 last year. The senior netball team started the defence of their league title with a very comfortable win over Tonyrefail.

Pupils have been tackling the scenery of the valley in the inter-schools cross country championships. Where ever the pupils have represented the school, they always represent with pride, respect and maximum effort. Good luck to all teams for the season ahead!

## **Examinations**

Pupils within year 11 have been preparing for the November examinations in Maths over the last few weeks with many taking advantage of the vast number of revision and preparation sessions. The examinations will be upon us directly after half term so it is key that time over half term is spent on revision for those entered for the examinations. As well as this, mock examinations will also take place for all upper pupils in the run-in to Christmas with more information to follow to parents.

## **Announcements:**

Y11 Parent and Careers evening will take place at school on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November. This evening is crucial in terms of parents receiving an update on pupil progress as well as an opportunity to meet and discuss career pathway opportunities for next year e.g. A-Levels/College/Apprenticeships.

A reminder as stated in previous correspondence, blazers will become a compulsory part of the school uniform for **all** pupils in years 9, 10 and 11 after half term. Families who may require additional support in purchasing a blazer are reminded that they should contact Mr Ryan Evans over the phone or via email during half term on [Ryan.evans@ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk](mailto:Ryan.evans@ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk).

Please can you review your son/daughter's social media security if they are active users of Facebook/Snapchat/Instagram etc. It is key that without exception, security settings should be enabled to prevent public open access to your son/daughters page/profile.

**Have a fantastic half term**

**Mr Evans**

## School uniform—upper school

### Minimum uniform expectation

- Navy badged blazer (compulsory from the start of November 2019)
- Navy badged jumper or cardigan
- White shirt
- School tie
- Grey formal bottoms or dress - trousers, skirt, or tartan skirt (Summer uniform can include tailored grey shorts)
- Dark tights
- Black outdoor shoes

Dark colour coat

Please note that blazers for Upper School pupils are compulsory for the academic Year 2019 /20. Only one item of clothing needs to be badged so if a blazer is worn, a cardigan or jumper underneath needn't be badged.

### PE

- Black or Navy shorts, jogging bottoms or leggings
- Royal blue or white t-shirt
- Optional royal blue quarter zip sweatshirt
- Trainers

We will continue to be vigilant in ensuring our pupils wear their uniform correctly to engender a feeling of community and sense of belonging. **Can I stress that only grey formal bottoms and not black are acceptable.**

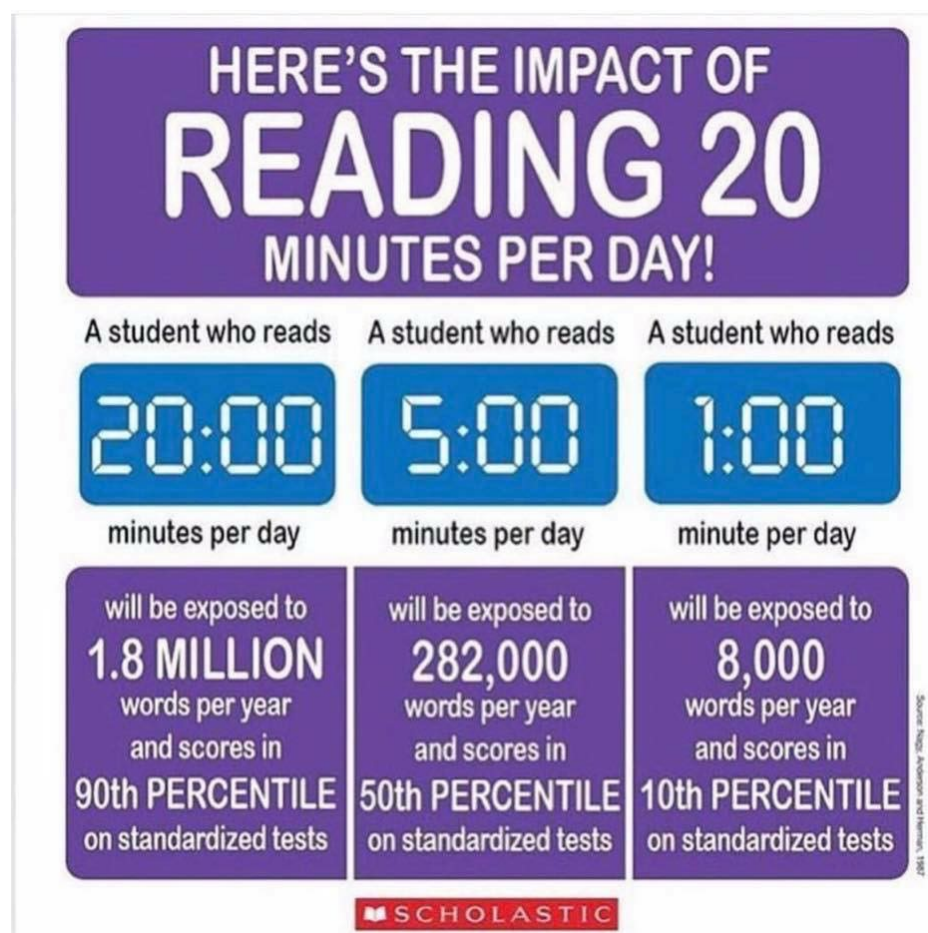
**Please note that 'red card' detentions will be issued to all upper school pupils not wearing a school blazer from the week beginning the 11th November 2019.**

**Please note that the uniform requirements differ in lower, middle and upper school. Full details across the whole school can be found in the information section of the school website [www.ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk](http://www.ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk)**

## Reading at Ysgol Nantgwyn

At Ysgol Nantgwyn we are entirely committed to ensuring that, as a minimum expectation, all pupils are able to read at their chronological age. This is a core focus for all staff at the school as we know that when pupils are able to read in line with their chronological age, they are able to access all areas of the school curriculum and thrive in their learning. Over the course of the first year in Ysgol Nantgwyn a wide range of reading methods and interventions were implemented. These have been incredibly successful with many more pupils reading at their chronological age this September compared to September 2018. We have invested in Group Guided Reading for the Lower School so that pupils learn to take ownership for their reading and share the experience with their friends on a daily basis. In Gwyn Middle School we have invested over £1000 in new reading materials and appointed library monitors to create a positive reading culture that will stay with pupils throughout their education. In Nant, we have heavily invested in young adult fiction for the Library Resource Centre which is now opened and manned every lunchtime for pupils. Upper School also now has a supply of reading materials that can be used during registration time, should a pupil not have their own reading book with them. Reading takes place for Upper School pupils every Friday in registration.

This is a fantastic start to developing a reading culture and you are able to support this development at home. This infographic shows what an impact just 20 minutes of reading a day has on academic achievements.



## Homework – Upper School

Ysgol Nantgywn staff have been working to develop a revised homework policy across the school. The new policy is based on literacy, numeracy and the development of essential skills. At Ysgol Nantgywyn, homework activities are an important part of our home/school partnership and all pupils are expected to take part in a variety of homework tasks to enhance and support both their work in class and their progress in school. The homework will develop interest and engage pupils, as well as providing them with practise that they need to become secure in their learning and development of everyday skills. We would very much appreciate your support in encouraging your child to complete all homework set.

**Year 9** – In many classes, pupils are developing the skills required for qualifications and the homework set will reflect this; details are provided below. Pupils are also experiencing a range of optional subjects over the year to inform their future choices. In these subjects, they will receive one piece of homework per fortnight or a mini project over the course of the lessons completed at the end of the cycle.

**Year 10 and Year 11** - In qualification classes, the nature and spread of homework changes throughout the year depending on when controlled assessments and extended pieces of work are being completed.

Subjects will set roughly one piece of homework for each subject for every two lessons during each two week timetable cycle. This means that pupils should expect rather more homework from English, mathematics and science as they have far more lessons in these subjects. Pupils will have at least one piece of homework per subject over a fortnight. The format of the homework will vary depending on the teaching and learning within the curriculum. For example in English, pupils could be set an extended writing task or a reading task and then during revision periods instructed to watch the GCSE Pod video and create a mind map.

Skills based homework - Pupils are preparing for their qualification assessments and, as a recommendation, they should be undertaking revision/self-study work at home outside of the set homework. They should be reviewing work studied in lessons and making study notes using the provided material from the school to develop their knowledge and application of the subjects. For example, use of GCSE pod to watch a video on fractions in mathematics or to use the Google drive for science to access the past paper to enhance their application of the work or to read the set literacy text and make notes on the chapters to support their English exam. Please note this is in addition to homework, not instead of it.