

PARENT NEWSLETTER



October 2023



A NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

This is the longest half term of the year but what an amazing amount of learning has been done in the eight weeks that got us to the end of it. I wrote in the September newsletter how well pupils had settled back into school and this has continued into October which is very pleasing.

We celebrated a successful Shwmae Su'mae day in which all pupils were further encouraged to try to speak Welsh a little more often. As part of this, we had some very sizeable visitors to Gwyn building in the form of Seren and Sparc, both about 7 feet tall! Our pupils were delighted to meet them and have their photo taken with them. Older pupils made their way into Penygraig to talk to the local community about Schmae Su'mae day and were positively received by locals who participated in a little Welsh speaking too.

Year 7 have just visited Plantasia as part of their experiences, we have judges and Crimestoppers coming to speak with year 8 as part of their crime and punishment theme, year four have been considering why it is important that children have rights and what would/could happen if they didn't, year six have been creating infographics based on their theme of 'identity', year one and two have been busy learning outside, whatever the weather.

Our pupil leadership team has just launched for the year. We have moved away from the more traditional model of headboy and headgirl and now have five pupil leaders instead: Elliott, Seren, Eli, Tyler and Lily. They lead a team made up of one pupil from every form group – the form leaders – and every pupil leader and form leader contribute to a part of the school improvement plan on either 'learning' or 'well-being'. This half term, they are consulting with all pupils on the following questions which they have written and they will develop a set of recommendations for us to consider as a school:

- 1) How do we improve whole school attendance?
- 2) In what way could we improve the learning environment?
- 3) What ideas do you have for fundraising as a school to raise money for the school and how/who would you like us to run our charity support as a school?

This was a model that we trialed with our lunchtime development group last year which really worked in terms of getting the voices of lots of pupils but also making sure that the actions that we did take were the right ones. I look forward to updating you.

We had our first parent forum meetings in September which were really very positive. Notes from these meetings will be added to the website but some really useful, productive discussions were had. Some suggestions from parents about things that we could try have already been implemented – for example, a question about whether the Pantry could be supported by pupils volunteering has already been set up so that pupils can indeed volunteer. The agenda for this past meeting is as follows (the headings will be rolling items):

Terms of reference

School items to share that are currently happening

Lunchtime proposal group and changes to Nant building
Outdoor classroom

School items to consult with parents

Nantgwyn Pantry awareness and next steps

Parents item - give us more information about something

Parents nominated theme/aspect for the agenda next time

Specific questions from different year groups



A NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER CONTINUED

Having spoken with all staff in a recent development session, our 'even better if' would be to improve our attendance. I know that the messaging around when a child can and cannot attend has changed so many times over the past few years and we, as parents, have faced some difficult decisions at times but we do need to aim for attendance of 95% or higher so that attendance does not start to negatively impact our pupils and children in terms of both their learning and their social and emotional development. Our staff team will always work with you and your child to put in place measures to support should there be any particular aspects that are impacting them in wanting to come to school.

Year 11 parents should note that the qualification system will return to its 'normal' levels meaning that there is no buffer or mitigation for any potential impact of the pandemic on learning. Lost days will likely mean lost grades.

We have worked with pupils through our assemblies and form tutor times to build in positive messages about #teamnantgwyn. We have emphasised how we work together – pupils, parents, staff and governors to make sure that everyone gets the best out of every school day. We really do want the best for every pupil but understand that there will be occasions where things do not go to plan. When this happens, we really do need to work together to find out what happened and why it happened as well as try to plan to prevent against it happening again. Where there has been a dispute between a pupil and another pupil, we will likely listen to their view and speak with them separately but with the aim of ultimately bringing them together for them to restore their relationship. Where there has been an issue between a member of staff and a pupil, the same happens. The views of pupils are very important in this process and this discussion helps both to find a better way of working together.

On Friday 13th October, staff took on a challenge of walking 70km of the coastal path between Porthcawl and Cardiff Bay. This overnight challenge is after the success of last year's Pen y Fan challenge. This year's challenge adds a little more trepidation as we hike overnight between Ogmere and Aberthaw to successfully arrive in Cardiff Bay ahead of the Wales Rugby World Cup Quarter Final!

If you would like to donate, please use the link:

<https://justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ysgolnantgwynchallenge>

All money will be used to support the families of Ysgol Nantgwyn with the cost-of-living crisis we are currently facing.



Have a wonderful half term.

With warm wishes,

Laura Morris
Headteacher

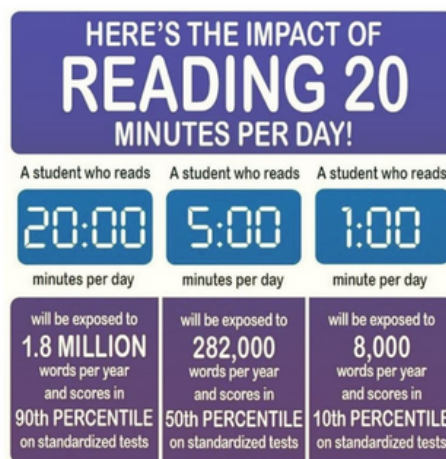
Newsletter focus item:

Reading

Learning to read is one of the most important skills your child will learn and a skill which underpins pupils' learning at all ages. Good reading skills contribute to language development, oracy skills, writing skills, social development and ultimately being able to succeed at formal qualifications at a later age.

At Ysgol Nantgwyn reading is at the heart of everything we do. It allows children to access the wider curriculum and to enjoy a wealth of literature. Through the enjoyment of stories, poetry, drama and non-fiction texts children are able to discover for themselves a love of reading and a world of ideas and experiences.

Our goal is that all children become confident, fluent readers, with an understanding of a variety of texts and genres. We aim for all children to develop an interest in books and to read for enjoyment. Reading is a skill which pupils only have to learn once and it is theirs for the rest of their lives.



We want our pupils to become readers who have:

- Excellent phonic knowledge and skills.
- Fluency and accuracy in reading across a wide range of contexts throughout the curriculum.
- Knowledge of an extensive and rich vocabulary.
- An excellent comprehension of texts.
- The motivation to read for both study and for pleasure.
- Extensive knowledge through having read a rich and varied range of texts.

The reading ages of all pupils from reception to year 9 are tested termly to support pupil progress. Some pupils will participate in our immersive reading programme which focuses on developing specific reading skills.

Children learn **4,000 to 12,000 words** per year through reading.

READING FOR 6 MINUTES A DAY REDUCES STRESS BY 68%.

When children have a home library, as little as **20 books** of their own, they achieve **3 more years** of schooling than children who don't have any books at home.

Our top tips for reading:

Reading at home will make a HUGE difference in your child's school success! Make reading part of your everyday routine. Put aside 30 minutes and make this part of your everyday routine. If 30 minutes is too big a challenge, start with 5 and then build to 10, 15 and so on...

Ask your child to choose what they'd like to read. They'll feel more interested in the book if they've picked it out themselves. (And don't worry if they keep returning to the same book, either!)

Take a look at the pictures. You don't just have to read the words on the page. Maybe there's something funny in the pictures that you can giggle about together, or perhaps your child enjoys guessing what will happen next.

Get comfortable! Snuggle up together somewhere warm and cosy. And make sure your child has somewhere comfy to read on their own too. Grab a snack and a drink whilst you're at it.

Turn off screens and turn down noise.

It's easier for both of you to enjoy the story without any other distractions.

Read together where possible.

Even as your child gets older, listening to you read will support them in making progress in their reading.

Make reading materials a part of family life – Keep books and magazines to hand. That way you and your children are ready to get reading!

All reading is good – Don't rule out non-fiction, comics, graphic novels, magazines, leaflets or even the back of a shampoo bottle. Reading is reading and it's all worthwhile.

After you read the book, have your child retell you the story. Think about what might happen next...

Talk about new words and their meaning. Practise using them in different sentences.

Join your local library You'll be able to get your hands on hundreds of fantastic books. Let your child choose what they want to read to help them develop their own interests.



Reading suggestions for your child

<https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/browse-by-age>

Reading for exams

It is important that pupils are practising their reading and comprehension skills in readiness for the exams. The most important thing is to familiarise themselves with key words, phrases and vocabulary that appear in exam style questions. They should use revision guides and past papers to learn subject specific vocabulary. For example, do they know the meaning of interconnection in geography? Do they understand what osmosis means in science? Additionally, do they understand what is required of them when an exam question asks them to compare and contrast, or analyse? All of this will aid their ability to answer questions and to excel in their examinations. Remember – failing to prepare is preparing to fail!

GCSE bitesize is a good general revision tool; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/levels/z98jmp3>

Past papers and mark schemes can be found on the WJEC website; <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/past-papers/>

Reading expectations

Lower school: All pupils in lower school need to be reading every night for approximately 20/30-minutes. For our youngest pupils, this could be a parent reading a book at bedtime, showing their child the words as they go. For our slightly older pupils, we send age-appropriate reading books home, some will need support with these, and others will be able to read more independently, either way, we would encourage all to be reading out loud.

Middle school: pupils in years 4 to 6 follow the Reading Eggs programme and should be completing this 5 times a week for 20 minutes, working through the levels and maps, along with completing the weekly assignments set by their teacher. Pupils should access the library area of the programme in addition to this and read a variety of books. Please contact your child's teacher if you need a reminder of your child's login details.

Nant based pupils in years 7 to 9 should spend 20 minutes, 4 times a week reading for pleasure. This can be a novel, magazine or any reading material that pupils enjoy.



Pantry

Our Pantry continues to be open on a Monday and Thursday between 3 and 4pm. You can make donations of items to it, you can bring something to swap for something else, you can make a cash contribution, you can take a few items if you are not able to make a contribution. All are welcome - it may be that you need a last ingredient for dinner and it is quicker to stop with us during pick up than stop again at a shop, you may have bought three packets of something and, having tried the first, want to donate the other two to the Pantry! Please try and pop your head in and have a chat with staff to see how you can engage.



Pre-loved uniform

At any point in the year, we are grateful for any donations of uniforms to add to those that we already have. We have a range of new and pre-loved uniform in great condition available to all. You can donate by dropping off in the blue bins in the foyer of either building and collect/choose by appointment with your school team.

Rights respecting schools

At Ysgol Nantgwyn we are committed to becoming a fully accredited rights respecting school. At present we have achieved our bronze award which shows our commitment to children's rights. The UN Convention on the rights of the child is made up of 54 articles.

Here is a summary of the UN Rights on the child. Pupils learn about these rights through the curriculum at Ysgol Nantgwyn.

This half term pupils have been looking at article 12: respect for children's views.

Article 12 says that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This principle recognises children and young people as actors in their own lives and applies at all times throughout a child's life.

Here are some activities that you could try at home to discuss this right:

For the youngest children: Talk about choosing at school – snack choices, who to play with etc. Discuss why it is important for children to have the opportunity to make choices. [This story](#) may help discussion about choices.

Discuss what decisions your child makes in your house? What about in school? Do they think they should have more of a say?

Part of Article 12 says: "Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously." Discuss the meaning of this and write a guide for adults helping them to show different ways that the child's views have been respected even when the decision doesn't go their way!



Teaching and learning at YN

This term has been a busy term with lots of learning experiences for all of our pupils! One of our focuses this half term has been feedback and seeing how staff and pupils can best use feedback to allow for even more progress. We have also had lots of experiences outside of the classroom with trips to Plantasia, Cosmeston Lakes and lots of outdoor learning.

Accessing Hwb and Google classroom

To support pupils and parents when accessing Hwb and Google Classroom, the following information has been added to our school webpage.

<https://www.ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk/parents-and-pupils/accessing-hwb-and-google-classroom>

Pupil leadership team

How were the lead pupils and form leaders elected?

The role, the qualities of leadership and expectations were outlined to the pupils. Those who wanted to become lead pupils in year 11 applied by writing a letter of application and a 'vote for me' presentation that was delivered throughout the whole school. Pupils then voted for the pupils that they felt represented them, their views and who would drive forward the views of the pupil body. This process was replicated in year 6 at the start of this academic year and in class voting took place to complete the lead pupil team.

What does the form lead do?

Each class throughout the school voted for a form lead. They will meet at designated times throughout the year with the lead pupils. They will feedback to the lead pupils suggestions from the form regarding specific items of school improvement. They act as a conduit between the lead pupils the voices of the pupils in their class.

How will funding be spent?

Funding will allow our lead pupils and form leaders to have some planning days together where they are bringing together points of evaluation and developing them into recommendations.

The funding will also be used to allow the pupil leadership team to implement some of their recommendations thus allowing them a level of autonomy in role.

How does the pupil leadership team feed into whole school improvement?

Lead pupils and form leads work together in learning and well-being groups mirroring the school improvement plan. They will discuss improvements within these specific areas. Currently the pupils are discussing improving the learning environment, attendance incentives and how they want to approach charity this year at Ysgol Nantgwyn.

What happens next?

Form leads are canvassing opinions from their classes. They will then meet with the lead pupils to feedback. From this meeting priority suggestions will be drawn up and the lead pupils will feed this back to the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors where actions will be decided. This will be fed back to the school via lead pupils and form leads.

Learning

9Ps: pupil needs and participation
Verbal and written feedback
Effective ALN approach

Well-being

Well-being approach
Attendance
Behaviour

Lead pupil
Tyler Phillips

Lead pupil
Seren Cotty

Lead pupil
Eli Lewis

Lead pupil
Lily Sayce

Lead pupil
Elliot Sayce

Form leaders

Form leaders

Form leaders

Form leaders

Form leaders

Form leaders