

PARENT NEWSLETTER



December 2023



A NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

A huge thank you from all of us to Nantgwyn families for their support this past fifteen weeks. The autumn term is regarded by so many in education as being the one that provides the most challenge...it is the longest and only punctuated by a one week break. The days get shorter and, at points, the only light bits are where the pupils are in school. The weather often makes it more difficult to get out and about and possibly less enjoyable. We acknowledge that at this point in the year, it might be harder to get children out of bed, the work increases in drying out coats and shoes and so we want to share that we are truly grateful for everything that you do to support children in making the most of every day.

While the term is long, it does mean that there has been a huge amount of learning taking place and we have seen pupils take big strides forward in their learning which you will hopefully have noted in interim reports and in discussion with your children. We have recently re-tested pupils' reading ages and I am very proud to share that we again have the highest proportion of children reading on or above their chronological age. This is incredibly important as it allows them to access the breadth of the curriculum. Reading often develops in response to developments in speaking and listening and all three impact on the standard that your child is able to write to. The value of the conversations and discussions that you have with your child and time spent reading aloud to them, listening to them read as well as settling them in a quiet corner with a book for a little while, is absolutely massive. Please keep going with your efforts throughout the December break – I am sure that with all the hustle and bustle of activities, twenty minutes sat together or in the same space enjoying any piece of reading will be a welcome bit of peace and quiet.

We have had a wonderful end to a term that has broken up so close to Christmas. Lots of different Christmas jumpers, singing, parties, concerts, an expressive arts showcase, carols around the tree, wreathmaking. The list goes on...

At the start of next term, we will be sharing the events calendar that will take us through to Easter. This will hopefully support your planning. We have had some fantastic PTA events this past term, including wreathmaking and tea with Santa and there is a lot more planned. As a school, we have really enjoyed meeting you more frequently and in some more informal ways – Gwyn assemblies and tours around the school, meet my teacher, celebration evenings and transition events have all really helped us to get to know you a little better and you us! I look forward to continuing this over the remainder of the year.

Our governors' annual report to parents was sent to you all recently via ClassCharts but is also available on the website. Nearly all of the website has been updated now so please do use it to find any information that you are looking for – it could also be used as good reading material for children and will likely create a number of different conversations.

All that remains for me to say is to wish you all a restful and relaxing break over the coming weeks and I look forward to seeing you all in 2024.

With warm wishes,

Laura Morris
Headteacher



Highlight of the term

Upper school:

Celebration assemblies have taken place this week for all year groups in upper school. It was lovely to see so many of our pupils getting rewarded and recognised for their efforts this term. A huge congratulations and a thank you to all for their hard work and commitment.

Last week, we welcomed back our past year 11 cohort for the very first celebration evening post covid. It was a joyous occasion and a welcome return for this event. It was wonderful to see so many pupils recognised for their hard work and outstanding achievements. We miss them all, but are incredibly proud of them. We wish them all the very best for their future endeavours.

Reading tests have once again taken place for year 9 and year 10. It has been so heartening to see almost every pupil making progress in their tests and it is most definitely a highlight of the term for us. Finally, it was a pleasure to watch our school choir perform in the Tonypany Christmas lights event in Tonypany town centre. It was a pleasure to see so many of our pupils taking part and the quality of their performance clearly demonstrated



Middle school:

In year 4, our focus has been on the theme of disease, delving into various aspects of health and well-being. The pupils have demonstrated a keen interest in understanding the impact of diseases on individuals and communities, now and in the past. Pupils have engaged in discussions and research activities to deepen their understanding and have debated whether faith influences medical treatment.

Year 5 have been exploring the concept of rights, encouraging pupils to critically examine the rights and responsibilities of individuals within society. Through this theme, they have gained a deeper appreciation for social justice and equality, actively participating in discussions and projects related to the UN rights of the Child.

In year 6, the focus has been on identity, with pupils exploring their own identities and understanding the diversity within our community. This has led to thoughtful conversations and creative expressions of individuality. Pupils have considered elements of their identity that are visible and invisible and they have sensitively shared ideas surrounding various perceptions of identity.

Throughout the term classes have participated in a range of enriching experiences. Year 4 visited the learning lab in Technquest where they participated in a workshop about Oceans. Year 5 took part in a theatre workshop with Theatr lolo focusing on diversity and year 6 attended St Fagans where they were immersed in Welsh history to help them further understand our Welsh culture as part of our identities. Pupils have also engaged in various physical activities such as playing dodgeball with the RCT Dragons dodgeball team. Year 5 have had fortnightly rugby sessions with many of our year 5 and 6 pupils then attending tournaments representing our school. Year 6 have completed playground leaders training and are successfully running activities for lower school pupils.

Both year 4 and 5 have delivered fantastic parent assemblies during the term, showcasing the wonderful work completed during the term.



In Year 7 our focus has been contribution, where we have looked at contribution to our world. This has allowed us to look at world views and also to look at the rights of the child. This has led to some fantastic discussions and debates within lessons about what children feel they should be allowed to do.

Our learning then took us on a journey about plastic waste and the impact it has on the environment. We were able to visit Plantasia in Swansea and see the impact humans have on animals and their habitats and were able to hold or touch a variety of amazing snakes, giant snails and lizards! In recent weeks we have been raising awareness for a charity of our choosing and have been creating our own inventive ways to raise money!

In Year 8 we have been looking at crime and punishment, looking at what crimes and punishments are and how they have changed over time. Some classes have looked at whether prisons are an effective way of punishing a person or whether other strategies would be more effective.

We were extremely lucky to have District Tribunal Judge Price and Her Honourable Justice Lloyd-Clarke in school to talk to us about how courts work.

Judge Price talked to Year 8 about civil and employment matters and how her role is to deal with issues between people and then Justice Lloyd-Clarke explained how she is the Senior Judge in Cardiff Crown Court and brought her gowns and wig in to show everyone! Year 8 loved her funniest case where she convicted Captain America, Barney the Dinosaur and Spiderman (a rugby team in fancy dress) for assault actioning as actual bodily harm (a fight)!

They have been welcomed back when they are 14 years old to see her chambers in Cardiff and watch a case!

Lower school:

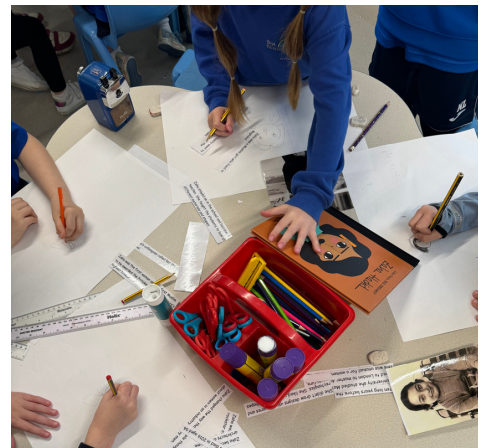
What a busy term it has been once again here in lower school. A term that will be rounded off with our fantastic pupils taking part in their Christmas concerts. Preparations meant we had to have a very different looking end of year celebration assembly, but pupils were amazing.

Pupils in nursery and reception enjoyed the falconry experience last week. Reception loved their visit to Hope Church to see the story of the first Christmas being told. This in addition to tasting/smelling foods when learning all about our senses, concluding with a visit to Nant to bake biscuits, delicious!

Year 1&2 have also been busy, with visits to Cosmeston lakes and to see Hansel and Gretel just to name a couple. They also found a time capsule in the school garden, then discovered it was from the time of the Great Fire of London, rolling back the years.

The Year 3 parent concert was fantastic and a lovely opportunity for pupils to show family members their learning environment as they led tours of the Gwyn building.

As mentioned, it has been an exceptionally busy, yet productive year to date. Can I take this opportunity to thank all pupils and parents for their continued support. We look forward to welcoming all pupils back on Monday 8th January 2024 at the normal time. Have a merry Christmas and a happy new year.



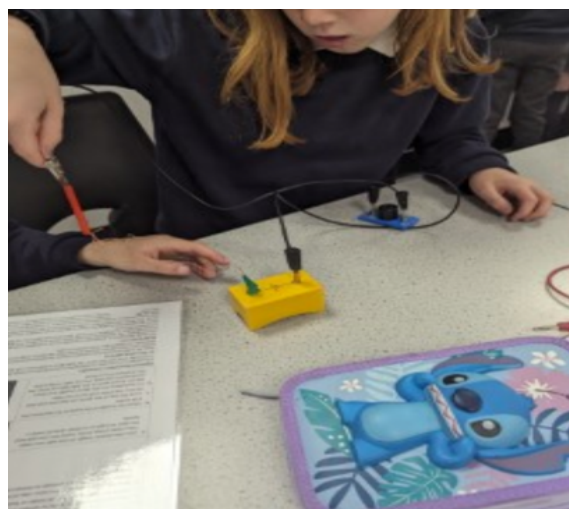
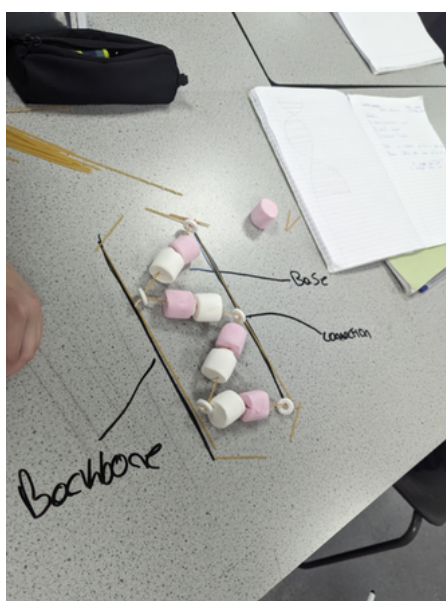
Highlight of the term- faculties

English, literacy and communication

Pupils across the school have continued to develop reading, writing and oracy not only in English/Literacy lessons, but also across their other subjects and play. Every communication assists our pupils to be better at listening and considering the viewpoints of others. The libraries are incredibly well-stocked and pupils take advantage of the new texts every time they arrive. We look forward to later in the year when we all celebrate World Book Day together. Please get your book suggestions and costumes ready!

STEM

It has been a busy term in the STEM faculty. In year 5, pupils have been learning about electricity, pupils have created their own working circuits and built upon this knowledge to create their own working wire loop games. In year 6, pupils have been learning about how to survive on a deserted island. Pupils completed a separating mixture practical, learned about the food groups and tasted tropical fruits. Year 7 pupils have just completed their CSI theme where they have been solving a mystery within Ysgol Nantgwyn, the pupils have completed practicals on chromatography, PH, and microscopes. Pupils in year 8 have been working on the topic of biology, they have been learning about photosynthesis, and completing practicals testing for starch and oxygen as a part of this. They have dissected and labelled a plant and have been learning about human genetics. Within DT lessons in year 8 and year 9, pupils have been cooking a wide range of different recipes from sweetcorn fritters to Christmas biscuits. They have been developing their understanding of the core techniques for catering. Within ICT year 7, pupils have developed their understanding of the difference between hardware and software. They have been developing further their basic ICT skills within spreadsheets, using formula within the table. Next term pupils will get to take part in a wide range of activities for national science week during the 8th to 17th March. In Upper school pupils are continuing their GCSE preparation across the sciences, food and nutrition, ICT and engineering. In January all of year 10 will start their GCSE Science practical exam and so another busy term ahead.



The faculty of Life has had a busy term with several guest speakers delivering lessons and sharing their expertise. These have included lessons delivered by Crimestoppers where years 7 to 11 have engaged in various workshops. Year 8 have been studying the theme of crime and have been fortunate to receive a talk from two local judges, a crown court judge and a tribunal court judge and pupils were able to ask questions and gain a close insight into their line of work. Year 7 enjoyed a trip to Plantasia. Year 10 and 11 have engaged in careers workshops with a representative from the University of South Wales and years 7 and 8 have also received careers lessons from an external agency named Prime. We have also had the school nurse and a specialist health nurse deliver sexual education lessons to year 10 and year 11.



Within the well-being area of learning, there have been several fixtures that have occurred across all year groups. Some of these include fixtures against Ferndale, Treorchy, Tonyrefail, Cwm Rhondda, Pontypridd High and Porth. Pupils in Gwyn have engaged with dodgeball and road safety from external agencies and taken part in a football five a side tournament with our cluster primary schools. Nant pupils were fortunate to take part in a wheelchair rugby event run by Cardiff Blues. Brodie in year 7 has represented the Rhondda amateur boxing club.

The faculty have also been busy every Thursday after school running transition events with our cluster schools.



Languages and culture

The faculty of languages and culture have had a very busy term, with guest speakers, trips and lots of learning across expressive arts and languages.

Languages experiences

This term, we have embarked upon our journey towards achieving the bronze award for Siarter Iaith, a scheme that promotes Welsh and bilingualism across the school. We have elected a Crew Cymraeg who will meet in the spring term and they will support to promote Welsh and bilingualism across Ysgol Nantgwyn, encouraging their friends and teachers to speak more Welsh in class as well as helping to organise our Eisteddfod and other events which celebrate our culture and heritage.

We also entered the Rhondda Eisteddfod in November, and our pupils were fantastic. They represented Ysgol Nantgwyn with pride and enthusiasm and the number of compliments Mrs Deavall received about how well they did is a testament to the hard work and time they put in. We look forward to entering many more competitions in the future and we are aiming for the win. Ardderchog.



In November we took 50 pupils from years 7, 8 and 9 to Gwersyll yr Urdd Glanllyn in Bala where they were able to experience and hear and use the Welsh language outside of the classroom. So many of our pupils, and even our staff who are learning, learnt new words, sayings and phrases. Pupils were given the opportunity to climb, canoe, complete team-building activities and learn bushcraft and many more. Cawson ni llawer o hwyl a sbri.

Seren a Sbarc visited pupils in lower school and brought with them friends to leave in school. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the visit and were so excited to see Seren a Sbarc in their classrooms. The smaller Seren a Sbarc dolls have started going home with pupils in years 1 and 2 to celebrate pupils speaking Welsh in school. Pob lwc!



In September we celebrated European Languages Day, where we held a quiz on the different languages spoken in Europe, even us teachers learnt new vocabulary. We also held a food tasting session at breaktime which was well attended, and pupils tried new foods for the first time, we had cockles, frittata, olives, chorizo, bara brith, pic ar y maen and more.

Languages and culture

Expressive arts experiences

Pupils across the school have had many arts experiences from going out to the theatre and big band visits to school to performing for friends and family in our assemblies.

Pupils were treated to an amazing performance from 'siglo sessions' a 16-piece big band experience, a few of our year 10 music class even had a cheeky go on a very expensive Epiphone guitar. Thanks to RCT Music Service for the amazing opportunity!



Nant pupils enjoyed a trip to Bristol to see a modern production of Oliver, this trip not only supported the work of the year 10 drama class but also allowed year 9 pupils to experience different theatre techniques.

We have been very lucky to be part of a story telling project with author and tv presenter Sion Tomos Owen for Rhondda radio. Pupils were fascinated and have created personal responses that have been very impressive.

We are immensely proud of the commitment and dedication from our brass band pupils, they are doing so well and sound fantastic!

In November 67 year 1 and 2 pupils headed to the Soar Centre to watch the touring production of Hansel and Gretel from the Sherman theatre. It was a fantastic trip that sparked a love for theatre in some of our youngest pupils.

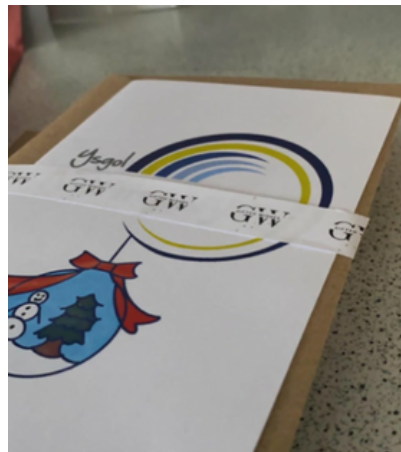
As well as seeing lots of performances we ourselves have been rehearsing, preparing and performing in our own showcases. Across the school we have been putting on a show, with performances in the community and in school.

Our process driven, not product driven approach to creating art has resulted in a very successful term. We have been committed to developing our creative skills across the whole process of making art! From using our surroundings to inspire us, linking colours to emotions to responding to written texts, our art pieces have shown a clear development of skills and understanding.



Mathematics and numeracy

As part of the enterprise aspect of the mathematics and numeracy faculty, pupils have been able to participate in a programme called Young Enterprise. As part of this, pupils come together to form their own business and then go on to create and sell their own products or services. This year, the company is being led by a group of year 10 pupils and is called 'Gifted Wishes'. The long-term product/service is going to be app-based (more information to follow from them during the spring term). Alongside the app they have also designed and made Christmas cards which they have sold at recent school events. It has been lovely to see them begin to develop and better understand the world of business and enterprise and we are really excited to see just how successful they can make their company this year!



Rights respecting school highlights

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.

Children and young people have 42 rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These 42 rights give children and young people what they need to grow up happily, healthily and safely. In 2011 Wales became the first country in the UK to make the UNCRC part of its domestic law.

This term our pupil leadership team and rights respecting school steer group have taken part in a workshop run by the children's commissioner for Wales to gain a better understanding of their rights and how we can support all pupils to understand their rights at Ysgol Nantgwyn.



PTA Christmas events and upcoming dates

As a start to the festive season, our PTA hosted the most lovely, Christmassy wreath making workshop. Thank you to our PTA and all those who attended for making it such a wonderful evening.

This was closely followed by a magical tea with Santa, where children enjoyed lots of fun, games and surprises throughout the evening!

Our PTA are an incredible asset to our school, with all the money that they make going towards improving our school and supporting our pupils.

The PTA will be hosting the following events over the next half term. Please support where you can.

Friday 26th January- pizza and quiz night 5.30pm-7.00pm

Friday 9th February- Gwyn Valentine's disco 3.00pm-5.00pm



Contact details

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