

PARENT NEWSLETTER



November 2024



A NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

What our pupils do while they are in school is of paramount importance to us and, over the years since opening, we have been constructing, improving and refining our curriculum to meet the needs of pupils of this generation. Doing this involves getting to know our pupils well in terms of their learning and the next steps in their development. At Nantgwyn, we place great emphasis on knowing the 'whole' child and using this to plan their learning to best secure progress for them. It is also so important to us that pupils are part of curriculum planning. Their interests, their questions, their wonderings, the things that make them think drive as much of our curriculum as is possible.

Our thematic curriculum in the Gwyn building starts with an 'immersion' learning session. Imagine arriving at school and having to work in darkness with only candlelight in order to prompt questions about what it is like during periods of war when energy supplies are rationed or cut. Think about the wonder of some of our youngest pupils when they arrive to school only to find that their whole classroom has been transformed and is now a zoo, full of animals that need looking after. These immersion activities generate so many thoughts and questions from our pupils and these are used to guide learning over the next weeks.

Our themes can change from year to year and they look different from class to class; this reflects the differences in our pupils and what they are interested in. Some of this style of learning continues in Nant, supplemented by the focus towards thinking about pathways and qualifications and making sure that pupils are progressing well so that they have as many options available to them as possible when they leave us at age sixteen.

This edition focuses on curriculum provision throughout the school and hopefully gives you information about Ysgol Nantgwyn and pupils' learning. There is also information on our website and our 'what are we learning' sheets that come home termly to give you an overview as well. If you have any questions, please do get in touch with your school teams.

With warm wishes,

Ms Laura Morris
Headteacher





YSGOL NANTGWYN: OUR CURRICULUM

VISION

At Ysgol Nantgwyn, our curriculum vision is based around our school statement; 'when we are ready, respectful and responsible, everything is possible'. It takes into account our school population and their needs and helps them to be ready to respond to the demands of our world and be responsible and respectful in doing so. To support this, it is informed by our local, regional, national and global context. The Ysgol Nantgwyn curriculum ensures that all pupils gain good knowledge and skills through a range of learning experiences so that they make good progress from nursery to year 11 and are ready to be successful in their chosen pathway when they leave school.

OUR CURRICULUM

The Ysgol Nantgwyn curriculum is designed to take account of the needs of all pupils and offers a broad and balanced range of experiences for all pupils. We recognise that pupils are individuals and therefore the way in which they experience the curriculum may differ. Our curriculum is iterative in its development and provides opportunities for pupils to inform and lead their learning. It provides opportunities for pupils to have meaningful learning experiences, to consider themselves and others and the part they can play in their local community as well as the wider world. The Ysgol Nantgwyn curriculum presents pupils with a range of big questions, gives them the opportunity to ask questions and enables their development of knowledge and skills in the exploration of possible answers through a variety of learning experiences. Our staff will carefully listen to our pupils and ensure that their thoughts, views and needs inform their learning.

Through consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors, we have agreed that our curriculum will place increased emphasis on the following identified needs:

- Understanding their responsibilities and rights
- Respecting the rights and needs of others
- Thinking creatively to solve problems
- Sharing ideas and emotions in a variety of ways
- Setting goals
- Speaking and listening to others effectively
- Building up and applying knowledge
- Forming good relationships based on trust and mutual respect
- Building mental and emotional well-being

AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

Our curriculum will provide learning which encompasses six areas of learning and experience. These are:

- Language, literacy and communication
- Mathematics and numeracy
- Expressive arts
- Humanities
- Health and well-being
- Science and technology

Each area of learning and experience has a set of 'what matters' statements. Staff use these statements and the concepts within them to design and plan the learning for pupils. These statements support pupils to make good progress by developing the skills and knowledge gained from their learning experiences from nursery through to year 11.

Our curriculum ensures that pupils learn about diversity, human rights and the rights of the child, relationships and sexuality education (RSE), Welsh and religion, values and ethics (RVE).

FOUR PURPOSES

Our curriculum will be designed, developed and delivered with the four purposes at the centre to ensure that pupils become:

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

CROSS CURRICULAR

Our pupils will develop skills and knowledge relating to literacy (oracy, reading and writing), numeracy (including reasoning) and digital competence across the full breadth of the curriculum.

DESIGN

Our curriculum design has been informed by our pupils, parents, governors and community members and staff as well as our cluster schools and external partners. Our design has centred around ensuring an inclusive, progressive curriculum that meets the needs of our pupils to ensure that they have the very best experience at school and are ready to succeed in the opportunities and challenges that will present throughout their life.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment will continue to be part of our daily teaching and learning as pupils and teachers use information from time spent with pupils to plan the next steps in each individual pupils' learning. As part of this process, pupils will engage with feedback from teachers about their learning so that they know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve and progress. Ysgol Nantgwyn will review the progress of each individual pupil regularly across the year and use this information to plan for individuals and groups to ensure that all make at least good progress and are well supported in doing so. We will report to pupils and parents about progress and approach to learning at regular points in the year.

REVIEW

The Ysgol Nantgwyn curriculum will go through a process of iterative evaluation and development to ensure that all pupils are experiencing the very quality of provision that we can provide. We will work with a range of people to gather a range of information from many different activities that include pupils, parents and teachers to inform our evaluations and planning for development. These evaluations will sit as part of our robust monitoring and evaluation work.

What pupils learn at Ysgol Nantgwyn

Our curriculum is iteratively designed; this means that we re-design the curriculum each year based on the needs of the pupils, their targets and their aspirations.

In lower school (nursery through to year 3), pupils follow a 'Caru Dysgu' curriculum which encompasses learning statements from the following curriculum areas:

- Mathematics and numeracy
- English, literacy and communication
- Humanities
- Well-being
- Science and technology
- Languages
- Expressive arts

These are taught using a blended approach by the pupils' Caru Dysgu teacher.

In middle school (year 4 through to year 8), pupils follow a mixed curriculum model which encompasses the following:

- Caru Dysgu (English, literacy and communication, humanities, well-being and expressive arts)
- Mathematics and numeracy
- Science and technology
- Languages
- Mathematics and numeracy, science and technology and languages are taught by faculty teachers.

In year 9, pupils start to explore more discrete subject disciplines and their curriculum encompasses the following:

- Mathematics and numeracy
- Enterprise and financial education
- English literature
- English language
- Humanities (including, but not limited to, geography, history, health and social care)
- Well-being
- Biology, chemistry and physics
- Information technology
- Design technology
- Welsh
- Spanish
- Expressive arts (including, but not limited to, art, drama and music)

Pupils take their options in year 9 in order to start their qualification courses at the start of year 10. The options process includes several stages and starts in the autumn term.

All year 10 and year 11 pupils will study the following curriculum areas/qualifications:

- Mathematics
- Mathematics - numeracy
- English language
- English literature
- Skills challenge certificate
- Enterprise
- Financial education
- Well-being
- Biology, chemistry and physics

Pupils will also study three options. Please note that options change year to year, depending on the choices of the pupils.

Caru Dysgu themes

Year	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
N	Me	Community	Dens
R	Independence	Travel	Creatures
1	People	Inclusion	Environment
2/3	Culture	Disaster	Social influence
4	Disease	Discovery	Systems
5	Rights	Competition	Conflict
6	Identity	Change	Enterprise
7	Cynefin	Catastrophe	British
8	Crime and punishment	Together	Equality and diversity

More information about what your child is learning each term can be found at:
<https://www.ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk/curriculum-and-learning/what-are-we-learning>

Independent learning

We call our homework independent learning and it is our expectation that all pupils complete this in line with the deadline. Independent learning tasks support and strengthen the learning that has taken place in class and, on occasions, is essential for helping to understand future learning. For nursery through to year 8, there will be one task per curriculum area per half term. For years 9 to 11, there will be two tasks per curriculum area per half term. Pupils receive positive points for all tasks that they complete. Please could you encourage your child to complete these tasks - sheets are emailed to pupils and mailed to parents at the same time so that you are aware of the expectations for your child.

Details of the independent learning set for your child can be found on our website:
<https://www.ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk/curriculum-and-learning/independent-learning>

Record breaking success

Exciting news for a selection of year 8 pupils who had the opportunity to collaborate with 100,000 - 150,000 pupils in other schools to participate in a Guinness World Record of: largest poetry lesson (multiple venues). Here, pupils were able to gather their ideas on the theme of 'What Counts' and then collectively collaborate on form, structure, title and key ideas that were edited into the final draft of the poem. This is a very special achievement for our 33 pupils who took part on the 3rd of October and all these pupils have received their official certificate of participation! If you would like to read what our pupils have contributed to, you can find the poem here: [What Do You Think Counts? - The Children's Poetry Archive](#). It really is a lovely read and something special for us and our pupils!



EA experiences

Pupils in year 6 visited the newly reopened Muni Theatre in Pontypridd to watch a production of "The Red Dragon". They then took part in a workshop with the theatre company exploring the theme of identity as part of their Caru Dysgu work.

Year 1 visited the Soar Centre to watch the Sherman theatre's touring production of "Little Red" everyone was enthralled with the performance and we are all now very excited for Christmas!

Year 4 have explored Matilda in their expressive arts lessons - can you guess which moment this photograph captures?



Extra- curricular clubs

A wide range of clubs have seen many pupils active over the course of the term ranging from the sporting to the academic. Our youngest pupils have been engaging in cosmic yoga and fun health and fitness classes. Term two clubs programme is in the development stage and will look to be out to parents before the end of the term. We are also looking to outside providers to give us greater scope of offer.

Children in need

Thank you to all of the community for supporting this great cause. We raised over £279 by wearing our pyjamas or an item of yellow.



Bryngarw visit

All classes within Lower School have enjoyed several fantastic experiences. Years 1 and 2/3 visited Bryngarw Park and went on an autumn walk. The children and staff thoroughly enjoyed their day, finding squirrels, trees full of autumn colour, apples in an orchard and amazing toadstools and fungi growing amongst the trees. The children built dens for little animals and had fun climbing trees. Thank goodness the weather was exceedingly kind to us, and we didn't even need to wear our coats. There were lots and lots of happy but tired faces on the bus journey back to school.

Nursery and reception children participated in a sensory walk around their environment. The children used all their senses to find a variety of objects in the environment. This type of experience is particularly important in developing the children's language skills.



Year 4-6 experiences

Throughout the term, classes in middle school have participated in a range of enriching experiences. Year 4 visited the learning lab in Technquest where they participated in a workshop about the human body as part of their theme of 'disease' before exploring the science museum. Year 5 took part in workshops in school led by members of the Senedd. They found out about the role of the Senedd in making and passing laws in Wales and pupils also took part in debates about our rights. Pupils in year 6 have 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 wellbeing experiences this term. Year 6 have had fortnightly rugby sessions with coaches from Rhondda Schools Rugby, with many of our year 5 and 6 pupils then attending tournaments representing our school. Year 4 pupils have had weekly swimming lessons throughout the term and year 6 pupils have also completed playground leaders training and are successfully running activities for our lower school pupils.



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